T H E   C R A Z I E S

CURRENT REVISIONS BY
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EXT. OLD PRAIRIE ROAD - NIGHT

It's DUSK. The DIN of night insects is all around. We're trudging along a rutted dirt road toward a glow on the horizon...

EXT. BALL FIELD, OGDEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL, KANSAS - NIGHT

A baseball game being played under the lights behind the local high school. STUDENTS, FACULTY, TOWNSPEOPLE fill the wooden bleachers. It's the regional playoffs. Everybody is here. The MAYOR, the PASTOR, the FIRE CHIEF, all the VIPs a small town has to offer.

Even the town sheriff has turned up for the end of the game. He parks his cruiser in the overflow lot and comes down the hill to the diamond, keys jangling on his belt beside a holstered gun he never uses. DAVID DUTTON. Easy-going. Second-generation sheriff. Pillar of the community.

Trading a dozen hellos, clapping some old timer on the shoulder, giving the coach a thumbs-up about the score, he comes around the backstop to the little CONCESSIONS TRAILER. Sets his hat on the counter. Handsome. Grinning with hometown pride.

DAVID
They're playin' well, Kev, they're playin' awful damn well. Win this one they could have a shot.
(to Vendor's wife in b.g.)
Hey Linda.

She nods hi. The VENDOR pours him a cup of coffee, on the house.

VENDOR
Fryeburg's tough. They'd be next.

DAVID
(smile fades)
Fryeburg, yeah. Shit. Well, one at a time, one at a time...

David heads off, coffee in hand.

DAVID
Thanks, Kev.

David leans on the sideline fence, sipping his coffee, watching the game. The star pitcher blows a fastball past the batter. David lets out a howl.

DAVID
Scotty McLeod! You throw like you drive, son, too damn fast!

He puts down his coffee so he can applaud the strikeout with both hands then picks it up again and takes another sip.

DAVID
Look alive, fellas! Deano, watch the squeeze!

No one has yet noticed the DARK FIGURE walking out of the shadowy woods beyond the outfield. Weaving like a drunkard, he walks right onto the playing field, oblivious to the game.

A man of fifty. Local pig farmer. His name is RORY HAMILL. He is carrying a SHOTGUN.

Heads turn, mouths falling open in the bleachers and dugouts, everybody staring in collective disbelief. It's surreal, a guy with a gun just walked past Petey Jenkins in left field.

DAVID
Rory, what in God -- ?

David drops his coffee and jumps the fence, goes out across the diamond to intercept him, hollering, waving his hands.

DAVID
Rory, whoa, Rory, Rory, whoa, whoa, whoa!

Rory Hamill gets as far as the infield before David, cutting in front of him now, keeping ten feet of distance, finally gets his attention.

DAVID
STOP I SAID!!

Rory stops, glassy-eyed, head lolling sickly to one side. David keeps his gun holstered, tries to reason with him. The players frozen at their positions on the field.

DAVID
The hell you doing, Rore? Hunh? Got a ball game going on here. We're playing ball, you come out here with a gun? The goddamn hell you doing?

Rory casts a glance around the field. A dizzying number of faces out there. All eyes on him. He wobbles a little, catches himself.

DAVID
Lay it down, Rory, you're drunk.

His gaze floats back to David and it's different than it was a moment ago. Harder. Deadly. David is not a man easily spooked, but that look sends a chill right through him.

DAVID
Lay it down!

Rory takes a wavering step forward. David draws his weapon. Rory responds in kind, leveling his. People gasp. David retreats a step. Might be the first time in his life he's had a gun pointed at him by someone ready to use it.

DAVID
Don't do it, Rory! Don't you do it!

Rory brings his eye to the sights, draws back on the trigger and - BANG! - David shoots first. A single shot, but a deadly one. Rory Hamill collapses midfield.

SCREAMS from the bleachers and SOBS in the aftersilence as the whole town registers the strange human tragedy that just played out under the lights behind the high school.

A body facedown in the grass behind the pitcher's mound, Sheriff David Dutton standing over it, astonished, holding in his hand the gun he never uses.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FIELD / HOUSE - BEFORE SUNRISE

The stillness of prairie grass in the blue hush before dawn. Beyond it, a traditional white clapboard house with an old barn that needs painting.

INT. BEDROOM, SAME HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A young woman awakens to find her husband's side of the bed empty. Runs a hand over the sheet, checking for body warmth. It's cold. Strange. She puts on a robe.

INT. STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

Comes downstairs in the darkened house.

WOMAN
Babe...?

No reply. Worried, she comes down the hall into the -

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

No sign of him. She startles at a movement behind her.

The SCREEN DOOR, creaking back and forth in a draft.

She comes over to close it and sees, through the screen, her husband sitting alone outside in the shadowy dawn.

EXT. BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

It's David out here, second-guessing himself. His wife JUDY sits down quietly beside him, come to lend a sympathetic ear. If he is one pillar of the community, she is the other, a local standout who came back from med school to be the town doctor.

DAVID
He didn't give me a choice.

Judy shakes her head in reassurance of that fact. Takes his hand for moral support. Looks to the distance, reflecting.

JUDY
You asked me once when we first got together if I thought less of you for staying here after high school and following in your dad's footsteps. I want you to know something. People like you, the ones that stay, are the reason why people like me come back.

David meets her gaze, heartened by that, and then places his hand gently, tellingly, on her midsection.

DAVID
You should be sleeping.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - DAY

David's cruiser travels through the lonesome countryside.

EXT. HAMILL HOUSE - DAY

Turns in the drive of a rundown farmhouse on the outskirts of town. Poorest family in Ogden Marsh. Parking, getting out, David meets eyes with two boys feeding pigs behind the barn.

JAKE and CURT HAMILL. Rory's teenage sons. Tough kids, but they've both been crying. Before David can say anything they turn coldly away.

He goes up the front steps to the house. Takes off his hat, knocks. The door opens to reveal Rory's widow. PEGGY HAMILL. Awkward is an understatement. David is the last person she expected to see on her doorstep this morning.

DAVID
Peggy, I...
(sudden loss for words)
I knew what I was gonna say before I got here...
(then)
I'm real sorry, Peg. I liked Rory, I liked him a lot.

Whatever resentment she might have harbored is defused by David's simple decency. Looking him in the face, she just crumbles. It's heartbreaking.

PEGGY HAMILL
(in heaving sobs)
What was he doin'? What was he doin'?

David holds her, the only thing keeping her upright. And we see them from a distance, together in their anguish, the town sheriff and the wife he made a widow.

EXT. TOWN CENTER, OGDEN MARSH, KANSAS - DAY

A lone street light flashes yellow on Main Street. It will do that all day. An A & P, a post office, a bank. No frills. No artifice. Like the people that live here.

David's cruiser pulls up outside C. R. Finley Funeral Home which doubles as the town morgue.

INT. FINLEY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

MORTICIAN CHARLES FINLEY and the TOWN PASTOR are discussing funeral arrangements in the dimly-lit foyer. David enters and they go silent, unintentionally.

DAVID
Pastor, Charlie...

TOWN PASTOR
(to Finley in parting)
I'll talk to the family, see if that schedule suits them.

The Pastor pats David's arm as he exits, a gesture of solidarity. David comes over to Finley. An odd man whose bony features reflect the grim solitude of his trade.

DAVID
Medical examiner still here?

FINLEY
Was a minute ago.

DAVID
Charlie, whatever the costs are for the funeral, bill comes to me, all right?

Finley nods okay. David heads for the back.

INT. BACK ROOM, TOWN MORGUE - DAY

TIP OF A PEN writes: "Aorta ruptured - fatal wound: gunshot..."

The MEDICAL EXAMINER, balding, bespectacled, finishing his autopsy notes. David walks over. A body sheeted in plastic on the autopsy table. Tag on the toe: HAMILL, RORY C.

DAVID
Just wanted to get his blood-alcohol, put in my report.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Zero-point-zero.

DAVID
Come again?

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Zero-point--

DAVID
I heard what you said. Stacy, that's not right, he was drunk.

The Examiner shakes his head. Collects his things to go.

MEDICAL EXAMINER
Checked it twice. Rory was a drinker, but not last night.

He exits. David, baffled, peels back the sheet and studies the corpse like it might offer clues. But there is only the grim reality of death. The tell-tale Y-shaped incision sutured shut across the torso.

And the small black hole his bullet made.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Small, functional. David's lone deputy is fielding phone calls in the common area. DEPUTY RUSSELL. Young. Capable. Built like a linebacker. He'd be sheriff if David weren't around but his loyalty is absolute.

RUSSELL
(into phone)
I can’t answer that - look, like I said, you'll have to talk to Sheriff Dutton, try back later.

David enters as he hangs up.

RUSSELL
Hey.

DAVID
Russ.

David goes into his office. Sorts through the mail on his desk. Russell follows, only as far as the doorway, stands there for a moment gauging the climate.

RUSSELL
Some fuckin' ball game, huh.

David sits down, nods.

DAVID
Yeah.

EXT. OGDEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Humble brick building with a sign out front. Home of the wildcats.

DAVID (V.O.)
So you all saw something last night I sure wish you hadn't...

INT. SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

David, before a microphone, addressing the STUDENTS in general assembly. SCHOOL OFFICIALS looking on.

DAVID
...Hard to make sense of it, even for me. Talk to your teachers, talk to me if you want...

The SEA OF YOUNG FACES, some visibly upset, some visibly not.

DAVID
...We don’t have all the answers, but we’re here to help.

INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE GYM, HIGH SCHOOL - LATER

Post assembly, David walks down the hall with the PRINCIPAL. Students swarm past back to class. Flirting. Talking on cell phones. Life returning to normal.

PRINCIPAL
Wasn't so long ago you were roaming these halls. That hellraiser turned into a sheriff somehow. And a fine one.
(then)
Your mom and dad still liking Florida okay?

DAVID
Yeah. Dad swore he wouldn't last a month down there. Then he saw the golf courses.

They come past a teacher who can’t unlock his classroom door. Mid-forties. Shirt and tie. Native Kansan. BILL FARNUM.

PRINCIPAL
Bill...?

BILL FARNUM
I give up. They rekey the locks this weekend? Maybe it’s jammed...

Farnum tugs on the door, mystified. But no one is more mystified than David and the Principal.

PRINCIPAL
Bill, you don’t - you retired, five years ago.

Farnum looks at them in utter confusion. Rubs his nose and his finger comes back with a BLOODY SMUDGE on it. The Principal offers a handkerchief as he walks Farnum away, gesturing to David ‘I got it’.

PRINCIPAL
Hit your head or something? Come on, why don’t you sit down in my office.

David watches them go, the tide of students flowing past him.

EXT. BALL FIELD - DAY

David stands at the fence staring at the empty field, dismayed.

TWO PLANES fly past high overhead. Side by side a half mile apart.

David glances up, barely taking notice. Sees the coffee cup he dropped is still lying there in the grass. Tosses it in the trash can before heading up the hill to his cruiser.

EXT. KANSAS PRAIRIE - SUNDOWN (AERIAL VIEW)

We're flying over the prairie at ten thousand feet. Beautiful view. Farms. Open fields. A sudden burst of HIGH-SPEED PHOTOGRAPHS rips the entire county into a GRID OF FREEZE FRAMES.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - SUNDOWN

Small town life. Families in the local pizza joint. Guy washing his truck. Woman walking her dog on an empty road.

EXT. OGDEN MARSH MEDICAL CLINIC - SUNDOWN

A single-story brick-and-mortar building with two cars in the lot.

INT. EXAM ROOM, MEDICAL CLINIC - SUNDOWN

Judy, in a traditional white doctor's coat, gives a tetanus shot to a boy with a bandaged foot. She has a gentle touch.

JUDY
(finished)
Wasn't too bad, was it?

The boy shakes his head. He and his mother stand to go.

JUDY
(musses boy's hair)
Adventure on, young man, but keep an eye out for...?

BOY
Rusty nails.

JUDY
Rusty nails.
(to mother)
Take care, Dana. Let me know if there's any swelling.

INT. RECEPTION AREA, MEDICAL CLINIC - DUSK

Typical slow night. Judy is updating records with her part-time office helper BECCA DARLING. Seventeen. Pretty. Local honor student. NURSE VIOLET, town gossip, also the clinic receptionist, wanders over, bored, buffing her nails.

NURSE VIOLET
Started talking about names yet?

JUDY
Not yet.

NURSE VIOLET
If it's a girl, I like Beatrice. If it's a boy, Morton. Knew a Morton once, 'course we all called him Morty, maybe you should just go with Morty.

JUDY
(endearing, not poking fun)
Thanks, Violet, I'll put those on the list.

Becca's cell phone CHIRPS. She checks the message, keys in a quick reply and resumes work, the entire exchange lasting ten seconds.

BECCA DARLING
Okay if I leave a little early tonight?

Judy, playing, scans the empty waiting room.

JUDY
Hmmm, how's our staff to patient ratio? I think you're good. Everything all right?

BECCA DARLING
Yeah. Casey Strout's having some people over.

JUDY
Algebra?

BECCA DARLING
Yep. Math party.

JUDY
My husband excelled at math in high school.

Becca smiles. Then:

BECCA DARLING
Oh, by the way, he was really cool at assembly today.

JUDY
Thanks.

BECCA DARLING
It's so scary to think what would've happened if he hadn't been there the other night.

Judy nods her agreement.

JUDY
Sometimes you just get lucky like that.

EXT. CORRAL, FARNUM HOUSE - DUSK

GIANT WET TONGUES licking something, licking each other in the process. A disturbing image, but only in close-up...

DAIRY COWS at a salt lick.

Bill Farnum stands in the corral watching, ankle deep in mud, briefcase in hand, blank expression. His wife DEARDRA calls to him from the house porch in the b.g., twelve-year-old son NICHOLAS under her arm.

DEARDRA
William!

If he hears her, he gives no visible indication. Nicholas jogs down to the fence.

NICHOLAS
Supper's ready.

Farnum stands motionless, mesmerized. Nicholas starts to climb the fence and suddenly his father speaks, without looking, as though he was listening all along:

BILL FARNUM
Be in in a sec.

Nicholas heads back to the house. Bill Farnum picks his way across the muddy pen to the salt lick. Surrounded by mooing cows, he stares at it -- brick-shaped, pinkish white, dripping with bovine saliva -- then bends and gives it a long disgusting lick.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Crescent moon. David eyeing it from the back porch as he drinks a beer in his unbuttoned sheriff's shirt.

Judy enters the kitchen behind him. Weary from the day. Sees him through the door. He holds her gaze for a moment then puts his hand under his shirt and gives it a little flutter, meaning his heart still beats for her.

Makes her smile.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

They kiss by the old gas stove. He brushes a lock of stray hair from her face. Married his dream.

DAVID
Hungry?
(she nods)
What do you want?

JUDY
(isn't sure)
Omelet?

DAVID
Sit.

TIME CUT TO:

Judy at the table eating her omelet. David sitting opposite, polishing her wedding band on his shirt. A ritual of his.

DAVID
Could drive you up to see your parents this weekend, if you want.

JUDY
(smiles)
Penance for your sins?

He smiles a little, slips the ring back on her finger, restored to its original luster. Then, still troubled by the day’s events:

DAVID
Thought maybe the moon was full, I don’t know, definitely some weirdness going around. Medical examiner said he found nothing in Rory’s system.

JUDY
Meaning - ?

DAVID
Meaning, according to the state, the man I shot was sober.

JUDY
What did Peggy say?

DAVID
Saw him at lunch and he seemed fine.

A mystery. David left with only his instincts. And the memory:

DAVID
Looked him right in the eye. He was under the influence of something. If it wasn't alcohol it was something else.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - NIGHT

Cows moo behind the barn. It's after midnight.

INT. FARNUM HOUSE - NIGHT

We drift through the dark hundred-year-old house, past the stairs, down the hall into the kitchen, past an old pot-bellied woodstove to the sink where we find Deardra in a nightgown looking out the window. Worried. Nicholas enters in pajamas.

NICHOLAS
Pa come in yet?

Deardra shakes her head no. Her eyes never leave the window. Nicholas comes over, sees what she's staring at.

NICHOLAS
What's he doin'?

Off in the distance, a COMBINE is going around in circles in a field, its spotlights sweeping the prairie like a lighthouse beacon.

Deardra takes a flashlight from the top of the fridge.

DEARDRA
Wait here.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

House in the b.g., Deardra crosses the field, spotlights whipping across her face.

Lit up like a nebula against the night sky, the billowing dust cloud gives the combine an otherworldly aura. A killing machine circling for prey, the thresher a gaping mouth of giant spinning teeth.

EXT. COMBINE - CONTINUOUS

Up close, the noise is deafening. Deardra strides into range. Cups her hands to her mouth and calls up to the darkened cab.

DEARDRA
William...?!

INT. COMBINE - CONTINUOUS

Through the windshield we can see her out there calling to us, disappearing from view as the combine goes around again.

EXT. COMBINE - CONTINUOUS

Deardra calls once more then jogs over and climbs the metal rungs to the cab. Opens the door.

DEARDRA
William Blaine Farnum, what in heaven's --

EMPTY SEAT.

A haunted pause then Deardra slides in behind the wheel. Powers down the engine. Turns off the lights.

EXT. COMBINE / FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The big machine grinds to a halt and there's a hush. Deardra climbs down. Scans the dark, windswept fields.

DEARDRA
William...?

Her voice carries without answer. She turns on the flashlight and walks out into the field.

DEARDRA
William...?!

The swaying wheat. The pulse of cicadas. And then, from back at the house, a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM. Her son.

DEARDRA
Oh God...

Deardra takes off running for the house. Frantic. Elbows flying.

DEARDRA
NICHOLAS?!

Another SCREAM. Deardra, in full flight, screams back.

DEARDRA
NICHOLAS?!

She crosses the field at a dead sprint. And hears something worse than a scream as she reaches the house. SILENCE.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She runs up the steps. In the front door.

INT. FARNUM HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

She slows as she comes down the dark hallway. No sign of her son. No sign of her husband.

DEARDRA
Nicholas...?

Silence. At the top of the stairs -

A HANGING BULB SWINGS like a pendulum, casting eerie shifting shadows. Deardra looks up the stairs at it. No sane person would go up there, except a mother for a child.

She climbs the stairs. Slowly, one step at a time. The old boards CREAKING underfoot. The bulb’s shadows rocking back and forth across her face.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Topping the stairs, she comes down the hall. Eyes wide with fear. Shadows dancing. The light is on in the BATHROOM. Door closed. Deardra reaches out a hand, pushes the door slowly open -- CREEEEEAK -- and sees...

EMPTY BATHROOM

She looks down the hall. Darkness at the other end. Voice trembling, she calls into it.

DEARDRA
Nicholas...?

As she takes her next step SOMEONE GRABS HER FROM BEHIND, throws a hand over her mouth and pulls her into the --

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Nicholas. Terrified. He gestures for silence, takes his hand from Deardra's mouth. Their pale faces lit by the light coming through the crack.

DEARDRA
What happened? What did he do? Nicholas, answer me.

NICHOLAS
He has a knife.

A chill runs through Deardra.

DEARDRA
(re: closet)
We can't stay here.

She cracks the door, peers out. Just then, a terrible sound. FOOTSTEPS coming heavily up the stairs.

And now they have no choice but the closet. Nicholas shuts the door and grips the handle with both hands, praying he's strong enough to keep his father out.

INT. STAIRS / HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Bill Farnum climbs the stairs into view. He is holding a KNIFE.

INT. CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Deardra helps Nicholas hold the door as Bill’s FOOTSTEPS come pounding down the hallway to the closet where they STOP ABRUPTLY.

Five seconds that feel like forever as Deardra and Nicholas listen to Bill's HOLLOW BREATHS on the other side of the door. Both clutching the door handle, expecting it to get ripped open any second.

Instead we hear a KEY go into the lock and turn - CLICK. The FOOTSTEPS head back downstairs. Nicholas tries the handle a couple of times before turning gravely to his mother.

NICHOLAS
He locked us in.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Slinging gasoline everywhere, Farnum walks out the front door. Empties what's left in the five-gallon can onto the porch and lights it with a match.

He sits down in the yard and watches it burn. Devoid of emotion. The house his grandfather built. His wife and son SCREAMING from within as blue flames scurry up the inside walls.

INT. DUTTON BEDROOM - NIGHT

A RINGING PHONE wakes up David and Judy. They both reach for it. His hand gets there first.

DAVID
Dutton...

He sits bolt upright, registering the news.

DAVID
I'm coming.

Jumps out of bed. Judy does the same before she even knows why.

DAVID
Farnums’, the whole place is going up.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - NIGHT

Engulfed. VOLUNTEER FIREMEN hose down the trees, too late to save the house or anyone inside. David’s cruiser pulls up. He and Judy push through the crowd of onlookers to the FIRE CHIEF.

JUDY
Norman, did they get out?!

The Fire Chief shakes his head. Judy, horrified, eyes the inferno that used to be a farmhouse.

FIRE CHIEF
Bill did. Begs the question, doesn't it?

David takes his meaning. Crosses to where Bill Farnum sits on the back bumper of a firetruck, expressionless, hands tied with baling twine.

DAVID
What happened, Bill?

Farnum doesn't respond. David squats in front of him, getting in his eyeline.

DAVID
Bill, what happened here tonight?

Farnum meets his gaze, glassy-eyed, remorseless.

BILL FARNUM
A reckoning.

Madness. David staring it in the face.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - NIGHT (AERIAL VIEW)

The burning house from ten thousand feet. Tiny, almost beautiful. Fire engines flashing around it like a child’s toys. A burst of FREEZE-FRAMES. The camera ZOOMS IN TIGHT. Another burst.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Next morning, Russell is outside trying to placate some LOCAL REPORTERS as David talks on the phone.

DAVID
Was hoping to transfer him, we’re not really equipped for this sort of thing. Okay, two o'clock.

Hangs up. A haunted pause. The last forty-eight hours betraying everything he knows. He turns his gaze to Bill Farnum who sits in a stupor in a holding cell at the back of the station. Russell enters.

RUSSELL
They tell me they don't want the deputy, they want the sheriff.

David gets up from his desk. Still watching Farnum.

DAVID
Looked at me last night like he coulda slit my throat and barely known the difference.
(turns to Russell)
Same look Rory gave me. Same goddamn look.

Walks out to talk to the press.

EXT. FARNUM HOUSE - DAY

Plumes of smoke rise from the ashes. A scorched brick chimney stands like a monument to the dead. David picks up a charred photo. The Farnum family. He drops it, surveys the scene with dismay.

A faint DRONING HUM draws his gaze skyward. Those SAME TWO PLANES flying over. Side by side a half mile apart. But lower this time. David's eyes narrow with suspicion.

DAVID
What're you lookin' for?

And as the search planes dip below the far treeline...

EXT. OGDEN MARSH - DAY

A freshwater marsh on the outskirts, the town's namesake. An OLD TIMER in hipwaders is dumping crayfish from wire traps into a bucket. He hears something. Straightens for a look.

Twenty yards away, something white is billowing like an untrimmed mainsail. He comes over for a look. Touches the material. Ripstop nylon. Billowing again, it's clear what it is... A PARACHUTE.

He follows the twisted cords over a rise in the marsh to where they settle in deeper water beyond. Gives the lines a tug and then staggers backwards in horror as -

A HUMAN BODY floats to the surface. Hideously discolored. Bloated from decomposition.

OLD TIMER
Lord God...

A MILITARY PILOT. Oxygen mask on his face.

INT. MORGUE, FINLEY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

A bodybag zipper opens to reveal the pilot's ROTTING CORPSE. David catches a glimpse and turns away, he's seen enough. Russell gags at the stench. Even Finley, mortician of twenty years, looks a little grossed out.

FINLEY
I'll see if there's any identification.

DAVID
(exits; needing air)
Yeah, do that.

EXT. FINLEY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

David and Russell cough the stench from their lungs as they cross the parking lot. Then:

DAVID
Got us a pilot, where's the plane?

Russell, as they reach the cruiser, recollects:

RUSSELL
Travis King - you know Travis?

DAVID
I know he's a lyin' bastard.

RUSSELL
Said he heard something out by Hopman Bog last week. I thought he was tellin' stories again.

David slows, meets Russell's gaze over the roof of the cruiser.

EXT. HOPMAN BOG - DAY

David, Russell and TRAVIS KING, a human rodent, motoring across the bog in a flat-bottomed aluminum boat.

RUSSELL
Sounded like a plane you said, huh, Trav?

TRAVIS KING
Yep. I gettin' paid for this?

RUSSELL
Big plane, little plane?

TRAVIS KING
I dunno, a plane, I was on the shitter. So how much I gettin'?

DAVID
Travis.

TRAVIS KING
Yeah.

DAVID
Say that again you'll be the second person I shot this week.

Travis takes him at his word. David notices something up ahead. Turns the boat toward it for a better look.

RUSSELL
Whaddaya see, chief?

David indicates a spot in the woods where the tops of trees have been sheared off.

DAVID
Something came real close to taking a bath.

David kills the outboard and they drift in closer. A strange toxic sheen to the water in this area. Russell reaches two fingers down for a sample. David yanks Russell's hand back.

DAVID
Know what that is?

RUSSELL
No.

DAVID
Then don't touch it.

David bends for a closer look. The spill has that chemical rainbow quality of gasoline. Jettisoned fuel perhaps. He scoops some into a Mason jar. Pauses as he screws on the lid.

DAVID
It was a big plane.

RUSSELL
Why's that?

David straightens, oddly quiet, staring at the water.

DAVID
'Cause we're right on top of it.

Off Russell's look, we rise up above them, to the height of the treetops, and see what David sees -

THE MURKY CONTOUR OF A MILITARY TRANSPORT PLANE submerged in the water where it crashed, the boat floating directly above.

EXT. EQUIPMENT DEPOT - DAY

David talks on a cell phone while he and Russell unhook the boat trailer outside the corrugated-steel equipment shed.

DAVID
(into phone)
Say, you folks missing a plane?
(brow furrows)
No? Well somebody oughta tell that to the pilot in our morgue. Military, yes, ma'am. Dutton. D-U-T-T-O-N. Yep, I'll be here.

He pockets the phone. Stews.

DAVID
Plane that size goes down and there's nothing in the paper, nothing on the news? Make any sense to you?

Russell shrugs, unlocking the shed.

RUSSELL
Depends what the payload is.

It's an off-hand remark, means more to David than Russell. He looks at the MASON JAR of tainted water on the hood of the truck then turns a brooding stare to the north, a pattern of thought taking shape.

DAVID
Hopman Bog, what's that drain into?

RUSSELL
Dwyer Creek.

DAVID
Which drains into...?

RUSSELL
Black Pond. Hey, you remember that monster catfish I --

DAVID
(turns)
Black Pond? Is that right?

RUSSELL
Yeah...

Russell isn't following yet.

DAVID
Russ, where the hell you think we get our water from?

INT. TOWN PLANNER'S OFFICE - DAY

TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP of the county on the wall. The Ogden Marsh watershed shaded in blue. David barges in, asking his question on the fly. The TOWN PLANNER is eating lunch.

DAVID
Which way's the water flow through town?

TOWN PLANNER
Nice to see you, too, Dave. Waste water or drinking?

DAVID
Drinking.

Town Planner unfolds a chart. A SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF THE TOWN'S WATER SYSTEM, his finger tracing the main pipeline.

TOWN PLANNER
Comes in from the north, breaks east west...

DAVID
Whose house does it get to first?

TOWN PLANNER
Most outlying. Let's see, uh...

Runs his finger along a certain outlying route to a certain outlying farm. Looks up at David.

TOWN PLANNER
Rory Hamill.

Hold on David's face.

INT. MEDICAL CLINIC - DAY

With discreet alarm David shows Judy the water system schematic at the reception desk. Points to the second most outlying farm.

DAVID
Next house is Bill Farnum's. I mean, am I talking nonsense here or is it possible they reacted to something they drank, something in the water?

JUDY
If it's contaminated, if the concentration's high enough - but, David, we're drinking that same water. Everybody is. If there's something in it, we're all going to get it.

David backs away, crisis on his hands.

DAVID
Farnum's are a mile out, might not have made it this far yet. Tell everybody don't drink it.

He runs out. Judy - the schematic in CLOSEUP - runs her finger from 'FARNUM DAIRY' across town to the pipeline's end, five miles from Black Pond, a plot labelled 'DUTTON FARM'. She contemplates that distance, their safety buffer, then raises her gaze to the WAITING ROOM.

It’s half full. There is a WOMAN sitting head slumped forward in the corner chair. Judy walks over, look of concern. Lifts the woman’s chin. The widow, Peggy Hamill, unconscious.

JUDY
Peggy? Can you hear me? Peg...?

Peggy’s eyes flutter open partway. Pupils dilated. Barely conscious.

JUDY
You need to lay down?

Peggy ATTACKS without warning. Knocks Judy off her feet, tearing her blouse. It takes three guys to pull her off and subdue her as Nurse Violet helps a badly shaken Judy to her feet.

NURSE VIOLET
What’s gotten into her?

Peggy Hamill, held down, writhing and shrieking on the floor.

EXT. POOL, MAYOR’S HOUSE - DAY

A flabby white-bread bureaucrat saunters up the steps of his in-ground pool, toweling off after a morning swim. MAYOR HOBBS.

MAYOR HOBBS
That water’s contaminated I’m Hilary goddamn Clinton.

David puts the jar of toxic water in his hand.

DAVID
I’m shutting it down, Tom.

MAYOR HOBBS
(eyeing jar then pool)
Shit.

INT. PIPE ACCESS HOLE - DAY

A MUNICIPAL WORKER muscles the wheelcrank on a high-pressure pipe valve, shutting off the town's water. Done, he looks up at David from the hole he's in.

MUNICIPAL WORKER
Off.

INT. SHERIFF CRUISER - DAY

David, driving back into town, lost in thought, RADIO PLAYING.

RADIO
WKLC Kansas City. News on the hour every hour. Fire crews in Southern California continue to battle wildfires this morning --

The signal goes to STATIC.

David gives the radio a glance. Tries a different station - STATIC. Flips through all the stations - STATIC. Weird. And then something weirder. Out of the corner of his eye, barely seen in the blur of a passing field. Whoosh -

A FIGURE IN A WHITE BIOHAZARD SUIT

So incongruous it takes a moment to register. What the hell? He slams on the brakes. Backs up, craning his neck to see what he saw. Can't see it from here. Stops the car.

EXT. SHERIFF CRUISER / ROAD NEAR FIELD - DAY

Gets out and comes around the cruiser. Surveys the field. Nothing there. Nothing but prairie. David stares across it, haunted, the radio in the cruiser HISSING STATIC.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

David enters, dazed.

DAVID
Either I'm losin' it completely or I just saw a guy in a spacesuit out by Hadley Road.

Russell gestures over to his shoulder to the holding cell.

RUSSELL
That makes two guys losin' it.

Bill Farnum is going BERSERK back there. Smashing his head against the wall. Tearing the cell apart. Uncontrollable rage. David, awed, steps to the windowed partition and watches.

Farnum turns. His face is hideous. ONE SIDE PARALYZED LIKE A STROKE VICTIM, THE OTHER IN VIOLENT SPASMS. He hurls himself at the glass - WHAM! - almost shatters it. David steps back as he goes berserk again.

DAVID
Did we or did we not request a transfer to Wichita this morning?

Rhetorical question. He picks up the phone. Starts to dial. Toggles the receiver. Line's dead.

DAVID
Yup.

Russell tosses him a cell phone. David hits the first two digits then sees the viewscreen - "SEARCHING FOR SIGNAL..." - tosses it back.

DAVID
Even better.

Russell frowns and steps outside, trying to get a connection. David tries the tv. WHITE NOISE. Turns it off. Clicks the computer mouse. CANNOT FIND SERVER. Tries the police scanner. STATIC. Switches it off, smiling at the improbability.

EXT. SHERIFF STATION - DAY

Russell meantime can't get a signal. David steps out beside him, surveys the town from the top of the steps. His face black with foreboding.

DAVID
You know what...

RUSSELL
What?

DAVID
We're in trouble.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

SCREECH. David's cruiser brakes to a halt at town center. He gets out. Scans Main Street. An ominous calm. The SQUEAKING of a bicycle chain turns his head.

A MIDDLE-AGED WOMAN pedaling toward him on a girl's pink-tasseled banana-seat bike, singing in eerie falsetto, an old hymnal.

WOMAN ON BIKE
...All things bright and beautiful, all creatures great and small, all things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all...

She rides past David, lost in her own world, her haunting song filling the silence.

ALTERNATE POV (through SLR camera) - From a block away, a BURST OF PHOTOGRAPHS captures the woman on the bicycle, then, panning to David, a second BURST captures him as he crosses Main Street, still watching the woman. As the photos continue snapping, he slowly turns, sensing he's being watched, and looks straight into camera...

BACK TO SCENE

Tight on David's face as he stands in the center of Main Street, staring at:

A BLACK CHEVY SUBURBAN WITH TINTED WINDOWS idling at the corner by the bank. Not a car that belongs to Ogden Marsh.

David approaches, hand drifting instinctively toward his gun. It tears off down the road. Fantastic acceleration. David stares for a moment, baffled. As he dashes back to his cruiser to give pursuit, a panicked WOMAN jogs across the street from the pizza shop.

WOMAN
Sheriff, we heard something from the funeral home little while ago.

DAVID
What'd you hear?

WOMAN
Screamin'.

A frozen moment. David turns his gaze to the funeral home up the street. Grabs his CB handset from the cruiser. Brings it to his mouth and clicks the button. Dead.

DAVID
Lizzie, run down the station, tell Russell what you just told me, tell him I need him asap.

She takes off running as David heads up the street to the funeral home, unholstering his weapon for the second time in three days.

EXT. FINLEY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Closed for business. David tries the front door. Locked. He goes around the back.

INT. REAR ENTRANCE, FUNERAL HOME - DAY

Where the bodies are brought in. David enters, nervous, gun drawn. He stops and faces -

A WHITE TILED CORRIDOR

Sterile. Eerily silent. A few gurneys and unopened boxes of odorless body bags and cotton shrouds in the hall.

DAVID
Charlie?

No reply. David comes slowly along, white-knuckled grip on his gun. The hall is lined on both sides with closed doors. David comes to a door, turns the knob, opens it to reveal -

THE EMBALMING ROOM

Stainless steel embalming tables. Sinks. Sluices. Rinse hoses dangling from the ceiling. No bodies. No Finley. David continues down the hall.

Comes through a door into the front of the shop. The FUNERAL HOME. Pink-hued walls. Liver-colored carpet. David pushes open another door.

A ROOM OF CASKETS

darkly polished. On display. David steps in, scans the room. All the caskets are open except

THAT ONE.

He crosses to it. With a silent two-count throws open the lid and takes aim at

A SILKY WHITE PILLOW

Empty casket. David closes it. To his immediate left -

A CURTAINED ALCOVE

runs the length of the wall. Coming past it to the door, David suddenly steps back and levels his gun.

SOMEONE IS HIDING

behind that curtain. The tips of his shoes poking out underneath.

DAVID
Charlie?

No reply. But there's definitely a man in black shoes standing there. David steps closer. Takes hold of the curtain. Whisks it open to reveal -

A ROW OF MANNEQUINS IN FUNERAL SUITS AND SHOES

David almost puts a bullet in one. Curses under his breath. Suddenly hears something. Very faint. Coming from behind him. Down the white-tiled hall he just exited...

Is someone WEEPING?

David cocks the hammer of his gun. Follows that FAINT MUFFLED WEEPING down the hall to a closed door.

Opens it.

THE MORGUE

No sign of Finley. Just sheet-covered CORPSES on autopsy tables. The weeping HAS STOPPED.

David enters. Autopsy scales hang beside the bodies. Closets and refrigerated shelves along the walls. David yanks open a closet door, gun trained, expecting to find Finley. Nothing but medical supplies.

A faint WHIMPER turns his head. He stares at the FIVE COVERED BODIES.

DAVID
Charlie, if that's you, say something!

No reply. Gun in hand, he steps closer to the bodies. Peels back the covers one by one:

RORY HAMILL'S CHALK WHITE CORPSE.

THE DECOMPOSING PILOT.

DEARDRA FARNUM'S CHARRED CORPSE.

HER SON'S.

David stares at the LAST COVERED BODY. We can see the outline of a face. The sheet expands and contracts at the nostrils. Slightly. As if from breath.

DAVID
Charlie?

No answer. Gun levelled, David takes the edge of the sheet, whisks it back to find -

THE TOWN PASTOR

Weeping through sutured eyelids. The sutures on one eye have loosened, a ghastly eye peers out through the slit. His nostrils and lips are sewn shut, arms and legs bound to the table with gauze.

DAVID
Jim - ?!

The Pastor goes into violent CONVULSIONS. David grabs a pair of surgical scissors from a tray and, pinning the writhing body with one hand, cuts the sutures sealing the mouth.

The Pastor's lips come apart like a deep fleshy wound, his convulsions subsiding only because death is imminent. In his last tortured breath:

TOWN PASTOR
Behind... you...

What? David turns.

WHIRRRR!! - THE BLADE OF A BONE SAW coming right at his face. Finley swinging it at arm's length with psychotic calm.

David goes down and Finley pounces, driving the blade at his throat. David catches Finley's wrists, barely keeping the saw at bay, forces the spinning blade against the leg of the autopsy table. SPARKS FLY as it cuts into the steel.

Finley counters. Finding his knees, he brings the saw above his head for a final plunge. But David catches him with a thrusting kick to the gut. Sends Finley crashing into the storage cabinets.

As he jumps up for more - BANG! - David shoots him. Finley falls in a heap. But in death he has launched perhaps his most lethal attack, dropping the SAW.

Locked in the 'on' position, it COMES SKIP-BOUNCING ACROSS THE FLOOR AT DAVID, propelled by the spinning blade. David scrambles backwards on his haunches, but can't outrun it. Just as it's about to hit him in the face -

A BOOT

stomps on the saw's cord, leashing it like a wild dog. The deadly instrument hops and skips around at the end of its tether, inches from David's face. Until -

Russell, owner of the boot, yanks the plug from the wall. He comes over, helps David to his feet. And only then sees the Pastor's sad fate.

RUSSELL
Christ almighty.

A DEAD EYE staring back at them through the sutured slit.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Emergency town meeting. Worried TOWNSFOLK abound. David and Judy trying to manage everyone's fear and anger.

CONCERNED MOTHER
What are we supposed to drink while the water’s turned off?

DAVID
The A & P has plenty of bottled. Bruce’s agreed to sell it at cost till we work out another source. Thanks again, Bruce.

The A & P Manager nods.

BANKER
And it just so happens while all this is going on none of the phones are working?

DAVID
I know, Nathan. Russell’s on his way to Wichita right now, see if we can get some answers.

FARMER
Where the hell's Mayor Hobbs?

HIGH SCHOOL KID
Hightailin' it to Kentucky.

DAVID
(shock and disgust)
What - ?

HIGH SCHOOL KID
Saw him on the way out of town. Fat bastard practically ran me over.

The kid's mom swats him for talking like that. David and Judy exchanging a look about Hobbs. De facto town leaders.

ANOTHER FARMER
So whoever drank it's gonna go the way of Rory and Bill? I drank it. My wife drank it. My kids.

JUDY
We don't know that it's going to affect everybody the same, everybody's body reacts a little diff --

EERIE LAUGHTER cuts her off. A woman in the back. Horn-rimmed glasses. Ten-dollar wig. Going red in the face she's laughing so hard. It's creepy, she can't stop. Everybody just stares as this demented old lady laughs and laughs.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - NIGHT

A sheriff department PICKUP speeds down the fog-cloaked highway toward Wichita.

INT. SHERIFF DEPT. PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Russell humming along at eighty miles an hour. Checks his radio. STATIC. Turns it off. Suddenly, FOUR DEAFENING POPS AS --

EXT. SHERIFF DEPT. PICKUP / HIGHWAY 50 - CONTINUOUS

-- ALL FOUR TIRES BLOW OUT!

A SPIKE STRIP lying across the road. The truck fishtails out of control, wobbling violently on its rims, threatening to roll...

INT. SHERIFF DEPT. PICKUP - CONTINUOUS

Russell struggles, teeth-clenched, not to let it.

RUSSELL
Shit!

Ruptured treads fly off. The pickup careens off the shoulder and slams to a stop in an irrigation ditch.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF DEPT. PICKUP/ DITCH - CONTINUOUS

Russell has barely righted himself when he's pulled from the truck by a DOZEN SOLDIERS IN BIOHAZARD SUITS. Thrown against the hood, M-16s in his face, Russell's astonishment is almost comical.

RUSSELL
Whoa.

INT. DUTTON HOUSE - NIGHT

Meanwhile David and Judy. Tense words in the kitchen.

DAVID
Maybe you should go stay with your parents for a while.

JUDY
Maybe you should go stay with my parents.

DAVID
Look, this isn't --

JUDY
No, David, you're not the only one with responsibilities here, half these people are my --

Sees something out the kitchen window. It scares her.

DAVID
What? What was it?

JUDY
(isn't sure)
Shadow.

David grabs his gun and goes out.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - NIGHT

David stands at the edge of the property, eyeing the back field. It's eerily still.

DAVID
Somebody there?!

Silence. Turning, he sees the light is on inside the

GARDEN SHED

He walks over, pushes open the door with the gun muzzle. As he peeks warily inside --

LAWN TOOLS CLATTER NOISILY to the floor. Scares the hell of out him. David switches off the light and then hears GLASS SHATTER inside the house.

JUDY (O.S.)
Who are you?! Who are you?!
DAVID!!

He crosses the yard at a sprint, kicks open the screen door -

INT. DUTTON HOUSE - NIGHT

And sees THREE SOLDIERS IN BIOHAZARD SUITS forcibly escorting Judy to the front door. David lunges into the fray, gun outstretched.

DAVID
What the fu--?! Get off her!!

His heroics are short-lived. Grabbed, spun, put in a chokehold, he is disarmed and dragged out the door by the suited intruders. It's over in two seconds flat - chilling, the ease with which he is subdued.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE / BUS - NIGHT

They wrestle Judy aboard an idling SCHOOL BUS. David behind her, still resisting, choked blue in the face.

JUDY
Where are you taking us?!

INT. BUS - NIGHT (MOVING)

Hurtling along under armed guard, David and Judy see shocking images out the windows. FAMILIES BEING PULLED FROM EVERY HOUSE IN SIGHT. The entire town being corralled onto buses like pigs off to slaughter.

EXT. BALL FIELD, OGDEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

ALL THE TOWNSPEOPLE stand in lines under the lights. Stunned. No one saw this coming. Raised ten feet and topped with razor wire, the fence is patrolled by armed guards in hazmat suits. A recorded message plays over the field's tinny P.A. system:

RECORDED FEMALE VOICE
...Please remain calm and do not interfere with the work of the examiners. Information will be provided to you as it becomes available. Thank you for your cooperation...

Repeating ad infinitum as BIOSUITED EXAMINERS come down the lines with digital ear thermometers checking temperatures. A single BEEP means you're okay. A quick triple BEEP-BEEP-BEEP means you're not and prompts a swift response, which we see playing out across the field:

Burly MEDTECHS loading the unlucky person into one of the many golf carts on the scene - pulling wives away from husbands, husbands away from wives, children from parents, parents from children - a coldly scientific process that ends with the golf carts speeding the outtakes up the hill to the high school while loved ones scream in vain for their return.

Here are David and Judy, as stunned and disoriented as everyone else. David confronts a passing examiner, his outrage reflected back at him in the mirrored faceshield.

DAVID
What did we get exposed to?! What was it?!

The examiner walks past without reply. Judy meanwhile appraises the medical teams, the work being done.

JUDY
Elevated temperature usually means infection, but a toxin can do the same thing... I don't know, the way Peggy was acting makes me think it's chemical.

DAVID
So they round us up with assault rifles, what's that?

JUDY
Medical response teams train with case studies, they know the symptomology, pharmacological outcomes --

DAVID
In plainspeak.

JUDY
(looks at him)
They're as scared as we are.

Judy steps away to help an ASTHMATIC ELDERLY WOMAN who is leaning against the fence. Soldiers escort MAYOR HOBBS and his WIFE onto the field.

MAYOR HOBBS
Governor Hatfield’s a personal friend of mine!

Nobody cares. They get dumped in a line near David. Hobbs draws hostile stares. Word of his hasty exodus has apparently gotten around.

DAVID
Hey Tom, how's Kentucky?

MAYOR HOBBS
Bastards spiked our tires, pulled us out at gunpoint.

DAVID
Wow, sounds like your civil rights might have been violated, you should look into that.

Hobbs frowns at the sarcasm, taking in the angry stares.

MAYOR HOBBS
(re: Kentucky)
Is that what everybody's so ticked off at me for?

DAVID
You ran. Town needed a leader.

MAYOR HOBBS
You be the leader.

DAVID
It's not our town anymore.

David steps to the fence, watches the guards prowling the perimeter. Otherworldly riflemen with biohazard hoods and leashed dogs. His gaze finds the old scoreboard behind the backstop. Lingers on it. Something poignant about it there behind the barbed wire.

HOME OF THE WILDCATS

But what he sees past it is chilling. Two figures standing in the tungsten glow of a flood light, staring at him...

JAKE AND CURT HAMILL

Rory's sons. Delirious with rage and vengeance. THEIR FACES ARE PARALYZED ON ONE SIDE, RIDDLED WITH SPASMS ON THE OTHER. Teeth and gums exposed by some obscene tightening of the jaw muscles.

A LOUD DULCET TONE on the PA system makes David jump. He looks back and the Hamill boys are gone. Haunted, he scans the dark woods. And suddenly -

A HAND grabs his shoulder. He spins, ready for a fight. It’s his deputy.

RUSSELL
Funny thing happened on the way to Wichita.

Gallows humor. Followed by a deadly serious:

RUSSELL
Who are these fuckers?

DAVID
Same ones who don’t know anything about a dead pilot and aren’t missing a plane.

David surveys the crowd, sensing beneath the fear and bewilderment a growing rage. It’s palpable, a chemical shift in their psychology.

RUSSELL
This don’t end well.

David shakes his head - nope. An EXAMINER comes down the line checking temperatures. David engages.

DAVID
I need to talk to somebody right now! Hey, do you hear me?!

The examiner jams a thermometer in David’s ear. Pushes the button. BEEP. Moves on to Judy, who is preoccupied with patient care.

JUDY
This woman is asthmatic, she needs her medica --

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP!!!!!!!!

Time stands still. Judy in disbelief. David spins to fend off the onrushing medtechs.

DAVID
Get away from her! She’s not sick, she’s pregnant!

They grab her. David fights, but is hopelessly outnumbered. Russell tries to help and is quickly subdued. They drag Judy away screaming.

JUDY
DAVID! DON'T LET THEM TAKE ME!

DAVID
LEAVE HER ALONE!!

You've never seen a man fight like David Dutton fights for his wife. Zapped with a Tazer gun, kicked, knocked to the ground by a rifle butt, kicked once more. Again and again he tries to rise, again and again he is beaten down, until his body no longer answers to his will.

Lying in the grass, he lifts his gaze just enough to see Judy being taken up the hill to the high school. By sheer stubbornness, he climbs to his feet once more. Takes a couple of wobbly steps.

A gun butt CRACKS him in the back of the head. He goes down and stays there this time. Facedown in the dirt by second base. Expelling one last breath of resistance, her name along with it:

DAVID
Judy...

And then, mercifully, he blacks out.

INT. ODGEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

POV of ceiling lights whipping by above as a masked examiner wheels us down the corridor.

It’s Judy’s POV, strapped to a gurney. The passing classrooms offer flashes of nightmare imagery:

PEOPLE ON GURNEYS GOING BERZERK. A TEENAGER RACKED BY WILD, TEETH-CLATTERING CONVULSIONS. OTHER PEOPLE SITTING IN STUPORS, DROOLING.

Suddenly, right in front of us -

A SCREAMING FACE SHATTERS the window of a classroom door, spraying the corridor with shards that CRUNCH as we roll over them. A biosuited GUARD beats the screaming man back with a baton. Turning the corner, we see

THE GYMNASIUM

Spanned by rows of sterile-white cots that have not been touched. Unopened boxes of supplies on pallets. Equipment wrapped in plastic. A medical contingency plan abandoned in its early stages.

As Judy is pushed into a maintenance elevator, an EXAMINER leans over her with an ANESTHESIA MASK. She tries to resist but her arms are strapped and the mask fitted so quickly to her face that her scream of protest fogs the plastic.

INT. LIVESTOCK TRUCK - NIGHT (MOVING)

David awakens in darkness. Lifts his head, disoriented. He’s lying in what appears to be a livestock trailer.

Judy. The thought sends him scrambling to the back door. He rams it with his shoulder. Pounds it with his fists. Kicks it with his boot. His fists again. And as he continues this futile effort to force it open -

A DARK FIGURE emerges from the shadows behind him. Creeping closer. A man. Sinister face catching the light. David, still hammering the door, doesn't see him coming.

The figure stops right behind David and we see the grim visage was a trick of the shadows. It's his friend, the concessions vendor from the ball game. KEVIN MILLER.

KEVIN MILLER
David...

David spins, wild-eyed, caught in a moment of madness.

DAVID
Kevin! I gotta get outta here!

Continues his furious pounding.

KEVIN MILLER
DAVID!!

DAVID
(spins again)
WHAT?!?!

KEVIN MILLER
You're scaring us.

David sees them now. FACES IN SHADOW at the far end, terrified by his erratic behavior. Men, women, children. Faces we recognize from the ball game, the high school, the town meeting. David calms himself, explaining:

DAVID
They took Judy.

KEVIN MILLER
(commiserates)
They took Linda.
(indicating other unmatched spouses)
And they took George and Francine and Whit and Simon and a whole mess of other people. Breaking your hand on that door's still a dumb idea.

David takes his point. Follows Miller back to the group. The townspeople sit huddled together like Third World refugees. A mechanic in a John Deere ball cap (EDWARD) engages David. Frazzled nerves fuel the exchange.

EDWARD
Can't you do something? I mean, Christ -

DAVID
What do you want me to do, Ed?

EDWARD
Something! You're the sheriff for God's sake!

KEVIN MILLER
(as peacemaker; overlapping)
Edward --

EDWARD
You're supposed to protect us -- !

KEVIN MILLER
(to Edward; overlapping)
Hey! HEY!! This ain't helping, Eddie. We're all in the same boat here.

Edward simmers down. Feels no real rancor toward David. Just can't handle the situation.

DAVID
Anybody heard what it is yet? What they spilled?

Nobody has.

TOWN PLANNER
Whatever it was, they're keeping us here till it's cleaned up. Whole town's sealed off. Roadblocks, everything. Tim Mitchell tried to run one of 'em, they shot him dead.

It's the guy who gave David the pipeline schematic, here with his ten-year-old son. Other children are in tears. Some of the parents as well. A DISTRAUGHT MOM breaks down at the sight of David.

DISTRAUGHT MOM
Amy's out there... my Amy...

He embraces her, not knowing what to say. A tall open-faced guy named SHELDON steps forward, local choir director clinging to his faith.

SHELDON
I know things look bad right now, I know they do, but like they say in every tragedy there's a blessing --

FEMALE TEACHER
(angry)
What's our blessing, Sheldon? I'm dying to hear this one.

SHELDON
We're not sick yet. Which means we still got a chance.

A blessing indeed. Suddenly, the SQUEAL OF BRAKES. The truck slowing. Lots of NOISE outside. A look of panic sweeps the group. David rips a metal brace from the wall. A weapon.

The truck STOPS. Parents shield their kids as the door is unlocked. It swings open. SHADOWY FIGURES rush through. David comes at them, ready to attack when he sees they are -

RESCUE WORKERS (in less severe biosuits, faces visible) offering bottles of spring water and Powerbars.

RESCUE WORKER
Quickly, people. We're getting you out of here.

EXT. QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - NIGHT

David and the others step warily from the truck, take in their surroundings. A TRUCKSTOP being used as an operations staging area. Military trucks refueling.

Transport helicopters coming and going from the adjoining field. Supplies and troops being shuttled to and fro.

In the fenced-in parking lot where the livestock truck is, a few HUNDRED SURVIVORS await evacuation, getting treatment in first aid tents. A SITE COORDINATOR stands on a military flatbed megaphoning instructions to a LINE OF SURVIVORS being processed for transport:

SITE COORDINATOR
As you board the buses you will each be given a dispensation card, it looks like this, do not lose it, you will not be allowed into the safe zone without your dispensation card...

GREEN PLASTIC BARCODED BRACELETS being snapped on wrists and hurriedly scanned into handheld computers. Temperatures taken one last time. Visible relief on people's faces as they look toward the EVACUATION BUSES idling nearby.

As David and the others take their place in line, a small miracle. The distraught mom spots her little girl. Bursts into tears -

DISTRAUGHT MOM
AMY!!

Hugs her, frantically relieved. The reunion only heightens David's loss. As he surveys the truckstop, plotting his escape:

KEVIN MILLER
Don't.

DAVID
What?

KEVIN MILLER
Whatever you’re thinking. There's one way out of here and it's on those buses. You got a seat on one. A seat a lot of people wish they had.

DAVID
Let ‘em have it.

KEVIN MILLER
David. This might your last chance. Don’t lose it running off on some fool's errand.

DAVID
Judy's a fool's errand?

KEVIN MILLER
You know what I'm saying.

DAVID
Tell you what, Kev. You don't ask me why I can't leave without my wife and I won't ask you why you can.

A bit harsh but right on the money. Kevin Miller is left to nurse his guilty conscience as David takes off.

We run with him down the narrow passage between two big rigs. Quick stop. TWO ARMED GUARDS on patrol. David ducks under the trailers, hiding until they’re gone. Moves on. Squeezing through some temporary fencing, he jumps in the back of a

SUPPLY TRUCK headed back into town.

INT. CLASSSROOM, ODGEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

SEDATED TOWNSPEOPLE strapped to gurneys in a social studies classroom. Among them we find JUDY, semi-conscious, shoved in here amid the overturned desks. An EXAMINER works from a field kit, not providing medical care, taking tissue and blood samples.

GUNFIRE erupts outside. The examiner stops his work and stares out the window. He doesn’t move. Something terrible is happening out there. Craning her neck, Judy can see

THE BALLFIELD DOWN THE HILL

where PANDEMONIUM has broken out. CRAZED TOWNSPEOPLE attacking examiners, murdering medtechs. They overwhelm the guards, shoot them with their own weapons, pull down the fence at center field, causing a stampede.

ALL THE PRISONERS RUN INTO THE WOODS LIKE LUNATICS FLEEING AN ASYLUM. The perimeter soldiers converge and open fire, but they can’t stop the escape.

Seen through the haze of sedation, the horror is dreamlike. Judy’s eyes flutter closed. Helpless on her gurney. Yesterday’s homework assignment chalked on the blackboard above her.

INT. SUPPLY TRUCK - NIGHT

Sitting among stacks of BOXES, David watches the moonlit prairie go by. Like a practical joke, an old ROAD SIGN goes past:

"Welcome to Marsh County. Friendliest Place on Earth."

David looks at the boxes, curious what’s inside. He opens one. Wishes he hadn't.

BODY BAGS.

INT. SHERIFF STATION - NIGHT

TICKING clock. Pot of coffee on the coffeemaker. The door CREAKS open. David, crouched like a thief, hurries to his desk, grabs his spare revolver, some bullets. A shotgun from the gun rack. Shells.

Loading up, he catches sight of something horrific. Drops a box of shells. On the floor of the holding cell -

BILL FARNUM HIDEOUSLY CONTORTED IN DEATH. His back arched high off the floor. Neck tendons, obscenely tight, practically tearing the jaw from his face.

David steps back, right onto the BARREL OF A SHOTGUN aimed at his head.

MAN'S VOICE
Easy.

David raises his arms, turns.

RUSSELL
Chief?!

DAVID
Stop surprising me like that.

Manly embrace. David goes to look at Farnum again. Russell obstructs.

RUSSELL
Don’t look at that.

DAVID
They let you guys out?

RUSSELL
Let us? People went nuts. Tore the place apart. It was like a human slaughterhouse. I just ran.

Sound of a SPEEDING CAR interrupts them. They duck the FLARE of its headlights. It’s that same BLACK SUBURBAN TEARING PAST THE POLICE STATION at ninety miles an hour.

RUSSELL
Judy, man, I tried to stop ‘em.

David nods, gathering shells from the floor. Stands, man on a mission.

DAVID
I’m going to get her.

Russell doublepumps the shotgun, the stress of the situation bringing out his redneck roots.

RUSSELL
Hoo-fuckin'-yah, chief, let's go to the high school.

INT. OGDEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

HYSTERICAL SHRIEKS and SCREAMS fill the school. Violent chaos spilling from the classrooms. An EXAMINER runs down a second-floor corridor past a half-dressed LUNATIC roaming the halls in a head bandage.

EXAMINER
(to staff)
Let’s go! Forget it, we’re leaving! <u>We are leaving</u>!

EXAMINERS scramble for the exits.

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

The EXAMINER drawing blood samples hears the evacuation order. Grabs his things and runs out, accidentally leaving a needle embedded in the last victim’s arm. Blood drips onto the floor.

PLIP. PLIP. PLIP.

We move up the arm to the face...

It’s JUDY.

She stares at the dripping blood. Hands strapped, she can’t do anything to stop it.

EXT. OGDEN MARSH HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

EXAMINERS and MEDTECHS jump in helicopters. SOLDIERS into trucks. It's obvious what's happening. The military is pulling out, conceding town center to the lunatics.

EXT. BACKYARDS - NIGHT

David and Russell, avoiding the main streets, cut through a series of backyards in a dark residential neighborhood. The night reverberates with DISTANT POPS of gunfire. They hop a fence and David grabs Russell, pulls him sharply back.

A PSYCHOTIC HOUSEWIFE

sits at a picnic table in a bathrobe gutting a turkey. Creepy uncomprehending stare. Her HUSBAND noosed from a tree behind her.

PSYCHOTIC HOUSEWIFE
Did Peter call?

Madness. They move on, hop the other fence. The housewife screaming in the b.g. -

PSYCHOTIC HOUSEWIFE
DID PETER CALL?!?

As they distance themselves, a look of dread comes to Russell's face.

RUSSELL
That's gonna be me.

DAVID
You don't know that.

RUSSELL
Right out of my goddamn tree like my Uncle Willard who swears on the Bible he ate a tadpole and shat out a bullfrog, and that's without the screwy water so --

DAVID
Russ, we got enough problems without you inventing 'em.

RUSSELL
Easy for you to say, you're at the end of the pipeline. I'm half a mile from the Farnums.

DAVID
Who's the sheriff?

RUSSELL
What?

DAVID
Who's the sheriff of Marsh County?

RUSSELL
You.

DAVID
I am. Who's the deputy?

RUSSELL
Me.

DAVID
You are. Deputy does what the sheriff tells him, that's the balance of power. Now I'm telling you you're not getting sick, understand?

Russell nods, appreciating the sentiment.

RUSSELL
Hope you're right, chief. I'm no world beater but I had plans.

Crossing a street, they see MILITARY HELICOPTERS, perhaps a mile away, lifting off into the night sky. David, alarmed, quickens his stride.

DAVID
That’s the school! They’re bailing! Come on!

INT. CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

PLIP. PLIP. PLIP. Judy watching herself bleed. She could die like this. One drip at a time. Gritting her teeth, pronating her forearm, she manages to painfully scrape the needle from her arm on the side of the gurney.

In the aftermath of the military exodus there is an eerie calm filled with SHRIEKS and GROANS, the INSANE RANTINGS of the abandoned inmates. With those horrible sounds in her ears Judy scans the classroom. Her fellow townspeople. Varying degrees of madness on display:

A middle-aged WOMAN SNICKERING to herself. A teenage BOY BABBLING incoherently.

A CATATONIC MAN with the same half dead, half twitching face Bill Farnum had. Others are unconscious, comatose, drooling.

Judy locks eyes, unexpectedly, with a high school girl strapped down on the other side of the room. Terrified, trembling, but otherwise asymptomatic. BECCA DARLING. Her office helper.

JUDY
Becca?! Becca, honey, are you hurt...?!

Becca, deep in shock, trembling in terror:

BECCA DARLING
Is this... really happening...?

Judy puts on a brave face, doctorly instincts taking over.

JUDY
Don't worry, it'll be okay. All right?

BECCA DARLING
You don't really believe that, do you?

Becca calls her bluff and suddenly it's Judy battling emotions. Near tears, she shakes her head no.

JUDY
Where's your mom and dad?

BECCA DARLING
We were hiding... we tried to get away...

The sentence ends in SOBS. Her parents are dead. Judy tugs at her restraints, wants to get over there to help but can't. And now they have bigger problems. A terrible sound draws their gazes to the door.

AN OMINOUS METALLIC SCRAPING NOISE COMING DOWN THE DARK HALLWAY.

Somebody's coming. You can hear their SHUFFLING STEPS. Judy shoots Becca a look. Be very quiet. Becca stifles her sobs as the creepy scraping noise comes CLOSER, CLOSER...

And now it stops. The classroom door swings open with a CREAK. A figure silhouetted in the doorway. Image from a nightmare:

A pot-bellied LUNATIC drenched in blood. BRUCE WEBBER. The A & P Manager. He is dragging a PITCHFORK.

Judy and Becca watch in mute terror, praying he'll leave. Instead he enters. Drags the pitchfork to the nearest gurney and looks down at the insane snickering woman.

He mumbles something nonsensical then raises the pitchfork and SPEARS HER in the chest. Becca SCREAMS. Bruce extracts the pitchfork from his first victim and shuffles to his second. The babbling boy.

SPEARS HIM and continues his murderous ritual, heading straight for Becca who is thrashing wildly but will never escape. Judy fights to free her hands, to save Becca. She can't.

Stabbing everyone in his path, Bruce arrives at Becca who closes her eyes as the lunatic raises his pitchfork. Just then, Judy from the other side of the room:

JUDY (O.S.)
NOOOO!!!!!

The kind of scream even a lunatic can't ignore. Bruce stops, turns. Sees Judy over there, strapped down by the blackboard, helpless. Nudging desks aside, he comes for her instead.

Hands pinned at her side, Judy stretches her fingertips just far enough to reach the blackboard chalk tray and, using it as a rail, gets the gurney rolling. Rolls herself right out the classroom door, gripping whatever's within reach.

Bruce follows her out, dragging the pitchfork.

INT. CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Judy rolls down the row of lockers, grabbing the PADLOCKS with that strapped hand, pulling herself along. The SOUND OF THE PITCHFORK right behind her. Blind panic setting in. Her diversion play quickly shaping up as suicide.

Craning her neck she can see Bruce coming. Quickens her pace, fingers grabbing frantically at the padlocks. And then tragedy strikes.

HER HAND

misses the next lock, the last one in this row, and as a result she misses the turn. And drifts helplessly into the center of the corridor...

The wheels of her gurney CREAK to a stop. Her EYES wide with terror. Her FINGERS still clutching at the air. STRANDED by a trophy case of old basketballs.

The STEEL PRONGS OF THE PITCHFORK dragging closer. And now -

BRUCE

shuffles into view. Stands above her, leering. The ROW OF PADLOCKS swinging behind him like a hundred little pendulums. As he raises the pitchfork -

A SHOTGUN BLAST

Catches him in the arm, spinning him fully around as a SECOND BLAST RIPS A SIX-INCH HOLE IN HIS CHEST. Bruce Webber falls in a heap, never comprehending his death. David and Russell run to Judy, Russell standing guard as David unstraps her.

DAVID
You okay?

JUDY
Not really.

Unstrapped, she takes off down the hall.

DAVID
Where are you going?!

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

Judy unstraps Becca. Becca cries in her arms. Judy holds her as she might her own child.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - NIGHT

PREDATORY LUNATICS wander the streets, maimed, bleeding, faces half dead. They attack each other at random, some unleashing the same murderous fury on inanimate objects. Non-predatory types stagger through the night babbling. CRAZED CHILDREN running around like orphans of the apocalypse.

David, Judy, Russell and Becca jog along Main Street, past shattered shopfronts and parked cars that have been BOOTED to prevent driving.

RUSSELL
Nobody’s driving outta here.

An APACHE GUNSHIP flies by overhead. Shockingly fast. Shockingly loud. David and the others duck around the corner by the bank. Looks of terror on their faces, knowing they’re the targets.

They run on. Up ahead, a YOUNG MOTHER sits breast-feeding her baby on the curb. She’s sobbing, rocking on her heels. Judy slows. David keeps her moving.

JUDY
It’s Molly Hutchins.

DAVID
You can’t help her.

And we see the baby in the young mother’s arms is not a baby.

A PLASTIC DOLL.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

They cross a wide field PULSING with cicadas. A mile from town center it’s almost peaceful. The occasional burst of gunfire in the distance.

DAVID
That truckstop where fifty hits the county line, they're taking people out of there, putting them on buses.

RUSSELL
Where to?

DAVID
Wichita maybe, wherever, some safe zone.

RUSSELL
Hell of a walk, county line.

DAVID
My cruiser's back at the house.

RUSSELL
We'll be sitting ducks on the highway.

DAVID
I'm thinking the power line road. It's crap, but we can drive it.

RUSSELL
Leaves us about a mile on foot.

DAVID
Exactly.

Judy falls behind, stops in the middle of the field. The others look back at her, then to David - what's going on? He walks back to her. She stands, arms folded, trying to hide her fear.

JUDY
What if they're right? What if I'm sick?
(includes Becca)
What if we both are?

DAVID
You're not sick.

JUDY
Saying it doesn't make it true.

DAVID
If you're sick, I'm sick -- we drank from the same tap -- and I'm not sick. Not yet anyway. So let's keep walking.

They head back to the others, Judy with lingering reluctance, the issue not entirely settled in her mind.

EXT. STONY CREEK - NIGHT

Wide, flat, glimmering with the same toxic sheen as the bog. David and the others step carefully from stone to stone.

RUSSELL
(to David)
See those folks in town? Man oh man, makes you wonder, don't it? 'Bout human nature?

DAVID
It's not human nature's doing this, it's a chemical.

RUSSELL
Actin' on an instinct that's already there or they'd be group-huggin' instead of tearing each other apart.

Becca slips on a mossy rock and PLUNGES INTO THE STREAM.

DAVID
Shit! Get her out of there!

They pull her out and tend to her on the opposite bank. Becca sits sobbing in the aftermath, scared to death, soaked from head to toe.

JUDY
It's okay, we'll get you some dry clothes at the house.

Judy shares a private look of concern with David, both noticing the creek's toxic sheen. Becca sees it, too, and draws her own conclusion.

BECCA DARLING
(shuddering sobs)
I'm... gonna... die...

Russell takes off his deputy coat and puts it over Becca for warmth. Squats in front of her, sheriff-in-the-making.

RUSSELL
You're getting out of here. I just made that my duty.

EXT. OLD FARMHOUSE - TWILIGHT

The foursome moves in wary tandem, skirting the perimeter of an old farm. A barn. Three silos. Judy walks beside Becca, who is cold, shivering, and generally miserable, but manages to strike a lighter note:

BECCA DARLING
Guess this means no prom, huh?

Judy half smiles, nods yeah. David's hand flies up, halting the group. He gestures 'stay' then walks on alone a bit farther. Listens. Comes rushing back.

DAVID
Down down down!

They all hit the ground. Hearts pounding. Listening. David and Russell draw their guns. David indicates the hillcrest. And now the enemy comes into view, moonshadowed and lethal -

A PLATOON OF BIOSUITED SOLDIERS wading through the tall grass in infrared goggles. One of them is carrying a FLAMETHROWER.

RUSSELL
Oh man.

DAVID
In there.

THREE SILOS behind them. They crawl through the grass.

INT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

Close the hatch and watch through RUST HOLES as the soldiers storm the farmhouse.

We hear a SHRIEK inside the house and moments later the soldiers emerge, dragging a CRYING WOMAN off the porch into the front yard. They stand her up. Somebody jams a digital thermometer in her ear.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP.

BANG! They shoot her. Point blank. A battlefield execution. The guy with the FLAMETHROWER steps up and torches the body.

David's anger overwhelms his judgement. He reaches for the hatch. Russell grabs his arm - no, chief. Flushed with rage, David tries to pull away, but Russell holds strong. And David's good senses returns. He backs down. But they're doomed anyway.

A SOLDIER IS HEADED OVER TO CHECK THE SILOS.

He checks the first then the second, working his way toward the last one, the one they're hiding in. Panic sweeps the group. David searches for some miracle escape. Up. Down. Left. Right. There is nothing. The only exit is

THAT HATCH

Through the rust holes we see the SOLDIER creeping toward it with his assault rifle. Russell readying his weapons. David his. Judy in disbelief. Becca whimpering with fright.

DAVID
(softly)
Shut her up!

Judy clamps her hand over Becca's mouth as

THE HATCH DOOR CREAKS OPEN.

The MUZZLE OF AN M-16 enters first. Then the soldier's GASMASKED FACE. To the right he sees nothing, to the left -

RUSSELL who smacks him in the head with his rifle butt, knocking him down. David and Russell drag the semi-conscious soldier into the silo and close the hatch.

DAVID
Pray they don't do a headcount.

They wait on pins and needles to see if the missing soldier will be noticed. The platoon regroups in front of the house and MOVES ON WITHOUT HIM.

Gasps of relief. Judy uncovers Becca’s mouth. Becca doubles over crying. Russell yanks off the soldier's helmet, ready to crush his skull with the rifle butt. But the face behind the mask is not the face of an enemy...

AN EIGHTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY.

Scared as hell. Far from home.

DAVID
Aw Jesus...

TIME CUT TO:

The young private sits against the silo wall, welt on his forehead where Russell smacked him. Blue-collar kid from a blue-collar state. Well-mannered. West Virginia drawl. PVT. BILLY BABCOCK. He's scared. They <u>are</u> the enemy.

DAVID
What's your name?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Billy Babcock...

David gestures to the yard outside, to the execution they just witnessed -- a silent seething ‘why’?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Orders, sir.

DAVID
From who?!

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
(shrugs)
Whoever gives ‘em, I dunno.
(then)
Are y'all gonna shoot me?

Judy answers for David and Russell.

JUDY
No.

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Then can you have him stop pointin' that thing?

Russell's shotgun aimed at his head. David gives Russell a look and Russell lowers it.

DAVID
Billy, I want you to tell me what exactly the fuck is going on down here.

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
I dunno. All's they said was there'd been some accident. My whole unit got flown in. We didn't even know what state we was in till we saw the license plates.

JUDY
There wasn’t anything on the news? Before you left?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
No, ma’am. From what I hear they're doing one of them media blackouts.

David and Judy exchange a look.

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Am I gonna die breathing without my mask?

JUDY
Is that what they said?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
They just said keep it on.

Troubled pause. Judy tosses him his gasmask. He straps it on over his face, breathes and talks through it the rest of the scene.

DAVID
Nobody’s said anything about what it was they spilled?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
No, sir, but -- I’m probably not supposed to talk about this, but my sergeant, he saw this computer program they ran over at central, some kinda 'casualty projection' I think he called it, you know, to see how things were gonna turn out down here.

DAVID
How'd it go?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Nobody lived past the third day.

Gulp.

JUDY
Nobody?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Crazies killed most of 'em, sickness got the rest. Today's the second day, I'd get out of here tonight if I was you.

DAVID
How? The truckstop?

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Dunno, sir. Perimeter's pretty hardcore. Even for healthies, they're giving 'em one warning shot then it's a kill order.
(then)
Look, um, I know I don't deserve no favors from you people, but if you let me go I swear to God I won't come back, they can courtmartial me, I don't care, I didn't sign up to shoot unarmed civilians. I'll just leave. Okay...?

Testing the waters, he starts to stand up. Russell levels his gun.

RUSSELL
Sit down.

DAVID
Cool it, Russ.

RUSSELL
He'll give away our location.

DAVID
We're not staying here.

David nods 'go ahead' to the boy. He stands up.

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Reckon you're keeping that, huh?

His M-16 and AMMO CLIPS.

DAVID
Yeah, we're gonna hold onto those, Billy.

Billy nods okay. Steps to the hatch. Pauses there.

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK
Sorry 'bout your folks's town.

Then exits, running off into the night, opposite direction of his platoon. David grabs the M-16 and ammo clips.

EXT. SILO - CONTINUOUS

As they come out the hatch:

RUSSELL
Why aren’t they telling anybody what’s going on down here?

David pauses, Russell’s question hanging.

DAVID
(indicates)
That’s why.

THE BURNING CORPSE. They just stare, the firelight playing across their haunted faces.

DAVID
Let’s get to the house.

They set off and we see the farmhouse from a distance. Alone on the prairie. A plume of smoke rising up ghostly pale in the moonlight.

EXT. FIELD BEHIND DUTTON HOUSE - DAYBREAK

They come up through the back acres. David with the M-16 on his shoulder. Judy offering a grave assessment.

JUDY
This wasn’t a chemical spill.
(off their looks)
They’re burning the bodies. It must be bacteriological, viral. Something that spreads by human contact. Or the air.

BECCA DARLING
The air? -- it was in the water.

Judy gives a grim nod.

JUDY
It was. It must have more than one mode of transmission. Or mutated or something, who knows.

RUSSELL
(to Judy)
How come I'm not crazy yet?

DAVID
I told you why.

RUSSELL
(to Judy)
Besides the fact that your husband officially forbade it.

JUDY
Expose a group of people to something, there's always a handful who aren't affected. I don't know, Russell, maybe you're naturally immune.

RUSSELL
Nah, I'm not that lucky.

They walk on. Judy's face darkens as THEIR HOUSE comes into view at the top of the field. Curtains sway in shattered windows. The cruiser, gutted by fire, smolders in the driveway. Caught up in her emotions, she dashes toward the house with David, Russell and Becca playing catch up.

DAVID
Judy, wait!

CUT TO:

ALTERNATE POV (STATIC) - Through a lace-curtained upstairs window, we see them run across the field to the house...

INT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Judy runs in the front door and slows, shocked -

THE HOUSE IS DESTROYED. Holes smashed through the walls. Sofas and chairs slashed open. The upright piano decimated.

David enters and surveys the destruction with Judy as Russell checks the other rooms to make sure there's nobody here.

Judy turns and walks out, past Becca who has stopped at the front door out of simple respect. David lingers a moment then follows.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Judy at the clothesline taking down the laundry. David walks over.

DAVID
What are you doing?
(no reply)
Stop.

He catches her hands. Judy breaks down, dropping clothes. David holds her beside the fluttering white sheets.

DAVID
(re: house)
None of this matters. You know that.

JUDY
(crying)
I don't care about the house... it's everything. Everybody. Everybody we know... I don't see how we recover from this... I don't see how this town ever comes back...

Neither does David. He holds her close.

CUT TO:

ALTERNATE POV - Through a downstairs window, we see David and Judy outside by the clothesline. LOW RASPY BREATHS. Someone, inside the house, is watching.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Judy walks away from the house to clear her head. Becca following, hoping to console. David comes up the steps past Russell who sits at the top, wiping sweat from his brow with a handkerchief. Russell nods at the smoldering cruiser.

RUSSELL
Sheriff-mobile's seen better days.

DAVID
(nods)
We'll have to take our chances on the highway. Power lines will take too long.

Tosses Russell the M-16.

DAVID
Stay with them, I'll be right back.

Russell nods and goes off across the lawn to catch the girls.

INT. KITCHEN, DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Overturned appliances. Food spilled on the floor. David grabs some BOTTLED WATER and tosses it in a dufflebag.

INT. HALLWAY / STAIRS - CONTINUOUS

With a bowling motion he slides the dufflebag the length of the hall to the front door as he heads upstairs.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cresting the stairs, David comes down the hall to the -

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He stops in the doorway, shocked. It’s a bloodbath.

A BLOOD-SOAKED SHEET

covers two corpses on the bed. Who's under there? David steps closer, draws back the sheet -

TWO SLAUGHTERED PIGS

Their severed heads on the pillows suggest a husband and wife. David places his hand on a carcass, checking for warmth. His face darkens. Fresh kills. He tenses at a sudden scary thought.

IS THERE SOMEONE UNDER THE BED?

He backs slowly away, angling his gaze underneath.

BARE FLOOR.

A moment of relief and then with renewed dread he slowly turns to face the doorway, realizing the killers are more likely behind him, hiding in the house, perhaps somewhere down this dark upstairs hallway.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

David steps into the hall. Tense breath and then he starts down it. Very slowly. Trying not to make a sound. Sensitive to the slightest CREAKS of the floorboards.

Halfway to the stairs he STOPS ABRUPTLY, thinking he heard something. Listens.

Nothing. The house is eerily still. Silent except for the curtains billowing in the broken windows.

He continues on. Heel to toe. Heart pounding. Each closed door a potential hiding place. Ten feet in front of him on the left, that door looks particularly suspicious.

THE CLOSET

open a crack. David’s eyes are riveted to it as he approaches, convinced it will fly open any second. But the attack comes from an open door to his right, from the half-painted nursery. As he passes -

A GARBAGE BAG IS YANKED OVER HIS HEAD and he is hit - WHAM! - flat across the chest with a pipe.

The blow sends him flying backwards. Bag on his head, David is kicked in the gut and dragged into the master bedroom by his feet, the plastic sucking back into his mouth as he gasps for air.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He is thrown across the room into the bureau. CRASH!

EXT. DOWN THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Judy, walking away, looks back at the house. The windblown grass drowning out b.g. noises.

JUDY

Did you hear that?

Becca shakes her head. Russell too. They walk on.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Staggering to his feet, David claws at the plastic bag covering his face, ripping it away to finally see his attackers.

JAKE AND CURT HAMILL

Faces half paralyzed, half in spasm, wrenched into hideous lopsided sneers.

Jake grabs the knife he used to slaughter the pigs and makes a lunging stab. David's hand flies up in a reflexive block.

THE KNIFE POINT COMES OUT THE BACK OF DAVID’S HAND!

In and out, a flash of steel. David recoils clutching his hand, blood pouring down. Curt swings a pipe at his head. Barely misses. David stumbles backwards onto the bed, sandwiched between the slaughtered pigs.

Jake jumps astride him, drives the knife two-handed at David's chest. David catches him by the wrists, sends him tumbling off the side of the bed, and rolls off the other side as Curt brings the pipe down like a sledgehammer at his face. The pipe hits the pillow instead.

FEATHERS EXPLODE EVERYWHERE.

David climbs to his feet, fumbling for something to fight with. Grabs the phone book. A poor choice. The Hamill boys back him into the corner. Feathers swirling. Curt unleashes another swing of the pipe. WHAM!

David partly blocks it with the Yellow Pages, but the force sends him flying backwards out the window.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

CRASH! - David flies through and tumbles off the porch roof onto the lawn below.

EXT. DOWN THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Judy, Becca and Russell whip around.

JUDY

DAVID!!

They run for the house, but they're too far away to help.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

David tries to crawl away, but there's no escape. The Hamill boys emerge from the house, closing in for the kill.

EXT. DOWN THE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Russell, Judy and Becca running as fast as they can.

JUDY

DAVID!!

They can't reach him before the Hamill boys do. Knowing this, Russell drops to one knee with his revolver and fires TWO QUICK SHOTS from the neighbor's yard - POP! POP!

Dead-centers a round in each of the Hamill boys' chests. It slows them but doesn’t stop them completely. Instantly up and running again, Russell puts another two rounds in each brother on the move - POP-POP! POP-POP! - dropping them in their tracks five feet from David.

EXT. DUTTON HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Judy runs to David's side, near hysterics. Badly shaken himself, he puts his arm around her. Blood courses down her cheek from his hand.

JUDY
David oh my God let me see! LET ME SEE!

He holds out his hand. Blood pooling in the upturned palm.

JUDY
Oh Jesus, David...

She flips it over, sees the exit wound.

JUDY
...it went through?!

He nods yeah, rattled to the core. Becca runs to the clothesline, grabs a T-shirt. Tears off a strip. Ties the first loop around David wrist as a tourniquet and wraps the rest around his palm as a bandage.

BECCA DARLING
Too tight?

David shakes his head, it’s fine. Quick thinking by Becca. Judy clasps her hand - thanks. This whole time Russell stands over the dead brothers in the b.g. Staring down at them.

And then things get WEIRD:

He reloads and puts three more bullets in the head of each brother, slowly, deliberately, savoring each shot. With dawning horror David and Judy watch as he reloads a second time and continues - BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! Judy can't watch anymore.

JUDY
STOP!!

Russell fires one last RESOUNDING SHOT and then, after a pause, walks over and pulls David to his feet, the loyal deputy again.

RUSSELL
(seeing David's injury)
Still with us?

DAVID
Yeah. How 'bout you?

Russell catches David's look and his meaning. Casts a glance at the bodies.

RUSSELL
Just making sure.

David nods okay. Judy and Becca staring in silence at the two bullet-riddled teenagers on the front lawn.

EXT. ROAD AWAY FROM DUTTON HOUSE - DAY

House in the b.g., the group heads down the road. David and Judy share a private word about Russell who walks just ahead, the M-16 on his shoulder.

JUDY
He's infected.

DAVID
You don't know that.

JUDY
You saw what he did.

DAVID
He saved my life, that's what I saw.

End of discussion. David lengthens his stride to catch up with Russell.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - DAY

Arrow-straight to its vanishing point. David, Judy, Becca and Russell come into view. It's hot and getting hotter. One of those midsummer days where you feel the heat by 10 am. David stops abruptly.

DAVID
Goddammit.

He turns and looks back the way they came, cursing under his breath.

DAVID
I left the water at the house.

JUDY
How far to the truckstop?

DAVID
Fifteen miles.

JUDY
What do we do?

Russell grins at the HOT SUN.

RUSSELL
We fry.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - LATER

Through SHIMMERING HEAT WAVES we see the highway. The foursome in the distance like a mirage. Then in CLOSEUP. Damp shirts. Faces beaded with sweat.

Russell takes off his shirt and walks on bare chested. Strong. Sinewy. Humming some 70's rock song to himself. David watches him, trying to gauge his sanity. Deflects Judy's look of concern with:

DAVID
I'd worry about her.

Indicates Becca, who has fallen behind. Judy goes back, checks on her.

JUDY
You all right?

BECCA DARLING
I feel sick.

JUDY
What kind of sick?

BECCA DARLING
Dizzy.

Judy takes Becca by the elbow, helping her along. Just then -

A GUNSHOT splits the silence. David spins, where did that come from? And before the group can orient themselves - ANOTHER GUNSHOT, closer than the first. They dive in the ditch as -

A PICKUP TRUCK

comes four-wheeling across the field.

THREE REDNECK PSYCHOS

in blood-soaked hunter vests howling out the windows, firing rifles. Tied down across the hood is the body of

PVT. BILLY BABCOCK

Naked. Gutted like a deer. David and the others stare numbly at this latest horror. The pickup tearing through an old barbed wire fence as it races off across the field.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - LATER

More walking. More sweat. Judy, helping Becca as before, spots a BINGO HALL set back from the highway on a dirt road. An old COUPE DE VILLE parked in the lot.

JUDY
David.

He nods, already spotted it. Russell doesn't seem to realize they've stopped and continues walking.

JUDY
What about him?

DAVID
Hey Russ.

Russell doesn't hear him, keeps walking.

DAVID
Russell!

Russell never turns, never slows. David watches, worried.

JUDY
Where he's going?

DAVID
(has no idea)
Let's get the car.

EXT. BINGO HALL - DAY

A white peaked-roof bingo hall sits alone on the prairie like a church without a steeple. David, Judy and Becca cross the parking lot. A haunting VOICE echoes inside the building, stops them dead in their tracks.

MAN'S VOICE
B-14...

David and Judy trade looks. He cocks his handgun and they continue toward the building.

INT. LOBBY, BINGO HALL - DAY

They enter a carpeted lobby. Framed pictures of happy winners on the wall. And here, a WATER FOUNTAIN. Becca, thirst-crazed, goes straight for it. Steps on the pedal. It HISSES and SPUTTERS. No water.

DAVID
Can't drink it anyway.

Becca releases the pedal. And now that haunting voice comes over the PA system:

MAN'S VOICE
I-21...

They all look to the set of double doors.

INT. MAIN ROOM, BINGO HALL - CONTINUOUS

The doors seen from the other side as they open. David, Judy and Becca stepping through, warily, to scan the dark hall.

MAN'S VOICE ON P.A.
G-47...

Standing in the shadows at the far end, under the big illuminated Bingo flashboard, an OLD MAN IN A SHRINER'S HAT is reading the numbers off ping pong balls as they fly up the chute into his hand from an electric blower-tumbler.

DAVID
(calls to him)
That your car out front?

No reply, no acknowledgement whatsoever from the old shriner. He reads another ball.

OLD BINGO SHRINER
(over PA system)
N-32...

They walk up the aisle toward him.

DAVID
Hey, is that your car out there?

OLD BINGO SHRINER
(over PA system)
O-67...

DAVID
Can we borrow the keys?

They stop ten feet away. The old shriner holds out his hand, palm downturned, as if to offer David something. A beat then - FSSHHTUNK - a ping pong ball flies up into it.

OLD BINGO SHRINER
(over PA system)
I-29...

Judy spots someone in the shadows. There, sitting among the empty tables on the other side of the room - A MORBIDLY OBESE MAN IN SUSPENDERS LEANED INTENTLY OVER HIS BINGO CARD.

She walks over to him, David and Becca close behind.

JUDY
Excuse me, is that your --

She recoils in horror. The fat man is two days dead. Throat slit. Jaw gaping at his blood-caked Bingo card.

They all stand there for a moment processing the image. A five-hundred pound corpse with a Bingo card. Rolls of decomposing fat overhanging the chair he's sitting in. Owner of the Coupe De Ville? Judy steps closer.

Holding her breath at the stench, reminding herself she's a doctor, she slips her hand into the dead man's shirt pocket. Empty. Right pant pocket. Empty. Left side. Empty. She can't reach the back ones. He's sitting on them.

JUDY
Help me lift him.

Startled looks of 'who us?' from David and Becca. A look in reply from Judy, 'yes, you two'. They come over and take hold.

JUDY
On three. One... Two... Three!

As they wrestle with the man's decomposing bulk, the dead weight shifts unexpectedly, slipping -

DAVID
Shit, get back!

The massive corpse goes CRASHING to the floor, the BELLY SPLITTING OPEN on one side unleashing a torrent of blood and innards and liquefied fat. Judy stands in that mess, repulsed. Holds up her hand.

CAR KEYS.

EXT. BINGO HALL - DAY

They exit to find RUSSELL sitting on the bumper of the Coupe De Ville. Pissed off, pouring sweat, M-16 across his lap.

RUSSELL
Guys trying to ditch me?

DAVID
Russ, I called to ya, you kept walking. We were gonna pick you up down the road.

Russell says nothing, dubious. David puts the keys in the ignition. Says a little prayer and gives it a try. The engine turns over twice and STARTS.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - DAY

Empty highway. The Coupe De Ville comes into view at a cautious thirty miles an hour.

INT. COUPE DE VILLE - DAY

David drives, scanning the horizon for danger. Judy doing the same from the passenger seat. Russell sits bare-chested in the back seat with Becca. Whispers to her, paranoid:

RUSSELL
He called to me back there?

BECCA DARLING
Twice.

RUSSELL
Loud enough to hear?

Becca nods yeah.

RUSSELL
Then why didn't I hear him?

Judy shushes everybody.

JUDY
Listen!

They all go silent. And now we hear it, the sound of an oncoming

APACHE

Oh shit. They're sitting ducks out here. David punches the gas, spins the tires - SCREEEECH!! A burst of acceleration followed by a sudden stop as he pulls the car off the road -

EXT. CAR WASH - CONTINUOUS

- into the wash bay of an automated car wash.

INT. COUPE DE VILLE - CONTINUOUS

David kills the engine, everybody pitching their ears to the fast-approaching ROAR overheard -

VROOOM! - the Apache comes screaming down the highway. Follows the road to its vanishing point. Gone. But the threat remains.

JUDY
We can't stay on the highway.

DAVID
(forced patience)
What would you recommend, dear?

JUDY
You said something about the powerline road.

DAVID
We're five miles the other way now.

Becca, in the back, looks out the window and GASPS. A HIDEOUS HALF-DEAD FACE watching them from the car wash lobby.

BECCA DARLING
There's somebody in there.

DAVID
What? Where?

BECCA DARLING
(pointing)
I saw someone.

They all stare at the lobby. There's nobody there.

JUDY
Let's go.

David reaches for the ignition, but before his hand gets there -

THE CAR WASH ROARS TO LIFE!

The tracks engage the front tires, yanking the car forward into the machine.

RUSSELL
Holy fuck!

BECCA DARLING
What's happening?!

DAVID
Somebody turned it on!

An overhead spray nozzle sprays its residual water and then, SPUTTERING DRY, pukes PINK LIQUID SOAP all over the windshield, blinding them.

JUDY
DAVID, GET US OUT OF HERE!!

He starts the engine, punches the gas, but the tires, covered in pink slime, JUST SPIN in the tracks. They'll have to ride it out.

DAVID
Goddammit!

A HIDEOUS TWITCHING FACE

Judy catches a glimpse of it through the swirling machinery.

JUDY
Over there!!

David and Russell spin to look, but their view is obstructed as -

BIG SPINNING BRUSHES

swing into frame, whipping at the windows and body panels, flinging the pink soap off in gooey tendrils. And now Becca sees out the back -

ANOTHER SINISTER FACE

She loses it. David whips his head around to see, but the brush comes spinning down off the roof and across the back window, blinding him.

Heightened terror. All the windows covered in soap. The DEAFENING HUM of the MACHINERY. Becca, hysterical, crouching on the floor -

BECCA DARLING
I don't wanna die like this!

A DARK SHAPE zips past Russell's window. He freaks. Rolls it down and GOES FULLY AUTOMATIC WITH THE M-16, spraying bullets everywhere. David and the others cover their ears, the DEAFENING GUNFIRE only adding to the terror.

DAVID
RUSSELL!!!

Crazed, Russell keeps firing, empties the clip. Tosses the spent weapon out the window. Rolls it up again. Turning to tell David:

RUSSELL
I saw movement!

DAVID
EVERYTHING'S FUCKING MOVING!!

A momentary calm as the BRUSHES RETRACT. And then -

WHAM! - The SWAYING CHAMOIS DRYERS hit the windshield, making everybody jump. David fires a reflexive shot through the windshield, then steadies himself.

The LONG TENTACLES OF FABRIC engulf the car, shimmying across the windows like living creatures. It's creepy. God knows what they conceal. David tries the gas again -

WHIRRRRRRRR. We hear the tires spinning. David keeps them going, inching the car forward by that small coefficient of friction.

DAVID
Come on, come on, come on...

Suddenly, as they clear the tentacles -

CRASH!

The driver's side window EXPLODES behind David's head, spraying the interior with glass fragments. Almost simultaneously the rear window EXPLODES, a cinder block landing in the back seat.

A LUNATIC FACE flies in at David through his shattered window, teeth bared like a rabid dog. David deflects the bite to the steering wheel where it takes a chunk out of the rubber, exposing the steel below.

David counters with a vicious elbow that crushes the lunatic's nose and sends him reeling backwards against the wall. Another LUNATIC walks up onto the hood of the car, holding a cinder block above his head that is destined for the windshield. Judy screams, shielding her face.

JUDY

DAVID!!

CRASH! The windshield shatters. The car roof caves in as a THIRD LUNATIC jumps on top and trampolines. And now the first lunatic is back at the window, a human pit bull, David barely holding him off by the throat as he starts the engine with his other hand.

The first lunatic lashes out, loops a RINSE HOSE around David's neck. A noose. The lunatic on the roof yanks it taut using the overhead swing arm as a winch to pry David out of the car.

Choking, head jammed against the ceiling, David throws the car into the reverse, creating slack in the hose. Judy frantically unwinds it from his neck. Freed, David goes full throttle. The WHIRRRRRRR of the spinning tires becomes a piercing SCREEEEEEECH as they catch the asphalt at the end of the tracks.

But at the last second, one of the lunatics loops the hose around

BECCA’S NECK

As the car peels out, the hose snaps taut and YANKS HER BACKWARDS OUT THE REAR WINDOW!

Judy whips around SCREAMING, jams her foot on the brake.

EXT. CAR WASH - CONTINUOUS

Jumps out and runs to Becca who is dangling from the swing arm. David and Russell jump out right behind her, dropping the attackers at close range. BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Judy grabs Becca around the torso, supporting her weight as she tries to get the hose from around her neck. A desperate effort and a futile one. The hose is too tight and

BECCA IS DEAD. Neck snapped. Noosed by the high-pressure hose.

David comes over, turns Judy away. She fights it and then reality hits. She hammers her fists on his chest in anger and then collapses against him in grief, sobbing.

Meanwhile, in the b.g., the Coupe De Ville, left idling in neutral, rolls across the lot and comes to a stop in the road. It sits there idling as Judy returns to Becca now, needing to get her down.

JUDY

Help me!

David pulls his knife and cuts the hose. Becca slumps into Judy's arms. Judy cradles her down into a seated position, weeping over the girl's body.

The scene would end on that image, but it's here that the APACHE revisits them. SCREAMING across the prairie to open fire on the exposed Coupe De Ville. Bullets strafe the car lengthwise. It catches fire and burns.

They watch in silence. Russell nodding to himself like a man reveling in God's authority. David and Judy's expressions edging toward doom. The smoke, blowing across their faces, paints Judy's tears black.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - LATER

They walk on. Judy looks ready to give up.

JUDY

They'll never let us in without testing us. I already failed that test once.

DAVID

And you know why.

JUDY

Oh Jesus, David. Even if you're right, how are we gonna prove it?

DAVID

I'm feeling persuasive.

Up ahead is a FAMILY STATION WAGON stopped by a spike strip. David checks the ignition as they walk up.

KEYS.

He reaches in, tries to start the engine.

JUDY

The tires are flat.

DAVID

It'll drive on the rims.

The engine turns over, won't start. He pops the hood. All the SPARK PLUG CABLES HAVE BEEN CUT.

DAVID

Bastards.

Slams the hood down. Moment of despair. David looks wearily down the highway. Hears something behind them. A CAR APPROACHING. There in the distance, coming fast.

DAVID
Move!

They all take cover behind the station wagon. Here it comes, racing down the highway...

THE BLACK CHEVY SUBURBAN

JUDY
Maybe they'll help.

DAVID
Did you just block out the last seventy-two hours of your life? They're not even gonna stop.

RUSSELL
Sure, they are.

With a deranged smile Russell kicks the SPIKE STRIP - buried in the dirt behind the stopped wagon - across the road.

THE SUBURBAN HITS IT AT A HUNDRED MILES AN HOUR, SKIDS SIDEWAYS AND GOES INTO A BARREL ROLL.

Pieces fly off as it tumbles. A bumper. A door. It comes to rest on its side in the cornfield. Russell goes jogging off toward it, rifle in hand. David and Judy in utter shock.

JUDY
If they're alive he'll kill 'em.

David takes off after Russell, hollering his name.

EXT. BLACK SUBURBAN WRECKAGE / FIELD - DAY

A nondescript man of fifty crawls from the wreckage. Buzzcut. Shattered gasmask hanging from his face. A MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER. He's on his hands and knees, bleeding from the mouth, from a gash in his hairline. Russell puts a gun to his head.

RUSSELL
Welcome to Marsh County. Friendliest Place on Earth.

David runs up. Judy behind.

DAVID
Russ! Russ! Let me talk to him!

Russell mulls it over, gun on the guy's head. Backs off.

DAVID
(to Intelligence Officer)
What did you people spill?

The Intelligence Officer spits blood, looks up at David, dazed, angry.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
Who the fuck are you?

DAVID
The guy standing between you and a bullet.

The Intelligence Officer spits more blood then shifts painfully into a seated position. Pulls off the shattered gasmask. Tosses it aside.

DAVID
What were we exposed to?

After a moment, with a sigh of resignation:

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
Zoonotic agent, rhabdoviridea prototype.

JUDY
Rhabdoviridea... You mean, rabies?

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
With a few alterations and enhancements.

DAVID
What's he talking about?

JUDY
(shocked; sickened)
A weapon. A biological weapon.

DAVID
Whoa, whoa, whoa, wait a minute, you guys engineered this crap?! You got any idea what it does to people?!

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
It does what it was designed to do. Destabilize a population. In this case, the wrong one.
(off their stunned looks)
(MORE)

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER (cont'd)
We lost a plane, fellas, what do you want me to say?

DAVID
How about ‘sorry for destroying your whole goddamn town’?!

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
Take it up with the pilot, I came down here to help!

David has no answer for that. The Intelligence Officer, like Billy Babcock, defies the ‘enemy’ label, just another guy on a different side of the issue doing his job.

JUDY
What’s the incubation period?

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
Forty-eight hours. After that, you’re either dead or you don’t have it. But they’re afraid it could go airborne. It’s rare but it happens and they’re not taking any chances.

JUDY
How rare?

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
One-in-a-million.

DAVID
You guys are gonna let us die here for one-in-a-million odds?

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
When the risk is global pandemic? You’re goddamn right. One carrier is all it takes. Nobody leaves.

Grim silence. The Intelligence Officer struggles to his feet, leans wobbly-legged against the wreckage, somebody’s husband, somebody’s father, the beaten hero of his own story.

MILITARY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER
(apologetic)
For what it’s worth, I --

BANG! - his head jerks back as a bullet rips through his forehead. Russell just shot him from behind David.

DAVID
NOOO!!!

Judy is SCREAMING. Falls down as she staggers backwards. Has never seen someone shot at close range. David grabs Russell two-fisted by the shirt and walks him backwards into the field, yelling in his face.

DAVID
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?!
WHERE'S YOUR HEAD AT?! I SAID I
WANTED TO TALK TO HIM!!

Russell holds David's stare, coldly indifferent.

RUSSELL
You talked.

Russell shoulders his rifle and walks off, picking up a portable MILITARY RADIO from the debris along the way. David watches him then helps Judy to her feet.

A DEAD INTELLIGENCE OFFICER IN A KANSAS CORNFIELD. Blood, sprayed across the Suburban's undercarriage, SIZZLING on the hot exhaust pipe.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - LATER

David and Judy walk the sun-scorched highway, eyes trained on Russell who walks fifty paces in front, a man to fear.

DAVID
I’ll get the guns from him.

JUDY
What if he tries to stop you?

Russell, out of earshot, glances back at them as if knowing their private thoughts. Turns forward again. And we get David’s reply:

DAVID
He's a good kid, but I'll kill him
if I have to.

Russell starts to jog. David and Judy match his stride, maintaining that fifty-pace separation.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Abandoned filling station. Russell crosses the lot and goes inside. David and Judy arrive moments later and follow him. Tense. Moment of truth.

INT. GAS STATION - DAY

David and Judy enter. On the far wall is a cooler filled with BOTTLED WATER. Russell tosses them both a bottle.

DAVID
Thanks.

Russell exits without a word. Steps outside and pours an entire bottle over his head. Opens a second bottle and sits down drinking it on the concrete median by the pumps.

David and Judy guzzle, the excess water running down their necks. Both watching Russell through the window as he SCANS THE CHANNELS on the military radio. STATIC. He puts the radio down and heads for the men’s room. David sees Russell’s mistake.

The radio, and HIS GUNS, sitting by the pumps.

INT. MEN'S ROOM, GAS STATION - DAY

Russell, at the urinal, flushes, zips, steps to the sink where he blows his nose into his handkerchief.

THE WHITE CLOTH TURNS DARK RED, FILLING WITH BLOOD.

He tucks it away, seemingly unaware. Stares at himself in the cracked mirror. Dead-eyed. Sweat rivering down his cheeks.

Madness.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Russell exits. Sees his guns are gone. Flushing with rage, he crosses to David, who has them.

RUSSELL
I'm gonna need those back.

DAVID
I'll carry 'em for a while. You've been carrying 'em the whole time.

RUSSELL
Yeah, thanks anyway.

Russell reaches for them. David shakes his head, stony.

DAVID
I got 'em.

RUSSELL
You sure about that?

DAVID
Yeah.

Russell nods, nods again, then draws from behind his back a SPARE HANDGUN. David is hopelessly outdrawn. Judy white with terror.

JUDY
Russell, we're on your side...

RUSSELL
My side? I didn't even know there was sides.

JUDY
There's not, I didn't --

RUSSELL
Tell her to shut up.

David gestures. Judy stops talking. Russell presses the gun to David's chest.

JUDY
RUSSELL, NO!

RUSSELL
TELL HER TO SHUT HER MOUTH OR I'LL KILL HER TOO!

DAVID
(to Judy while looking at Russell)
Stop talking. Let him think about what he's doing.

Russell stares David in the face. Finger on the trigger. Taps him bluntly on the chest with the barrel.

RUSSELL
One...
(taps him again)
Two...
(taps him again)
Three!

You're waiting for the gunshot but Russell just shakes his head in reproach.

RUSSELL
That's how many times I saved your life.

EXT. GAS STATION / HIGHWAY 50 - MOMENTS LATER

Russell, who now has all the guns, gestures down the road with his revolver.

RUSSELL
(e.g. ‘walk’)
Out in front where I can see you.

David and Judy start down the road, Russell behind them. They talk under their breath.

JUDY
Let's just run.

DAVID
No. Give him a target he'll hit it. Let me think a minute.

They walk on, weighing their options. And David realizes. They have none.

DAVID
(turns)
Fuck it, I'm gonna confront him.

JUDY
David, no -

DAVID
We don't get to that truck stop we're dead anyway.

He walks back toward Russell. Russell raises the M-16.

RUSSELL
Back off.

DAVID
I want to talk to you.

RUSSELL
BACK OFF!

Russell takes aim at David's face.

DAVID
Just wanna talk.

JUDY
DAVID, STOP!

DAVID
Put the gun down.

Russell tightens on the trigger.

RUSSELL
You better listen to me.

JUDY
DAVID!

DAVID
Put it down.

RUSSELL
FINAL WARNING, CHIEF!

DAVID
I just want to talk to you.

David walks right up to him. The M-16 pointed at his throat. Russell staring down the barrel.

DAVID
Can we talk? Man to man?

A long tense moment then Russell lowers his weapon.

DAVID
Okay. Here's the deal --

David PUNCHES HIM square in the face, lays him out flat. Russell, dazed, offers no resistance as David quietly disarms him, just stares at the sky like he's daydreaming:

RUSSELL
(hazy)
Remember that monster catfish I caught last summer?

DAVID
(disarming him)
Yeah.

RUSSELL
(hazy)
What'd he weigh, you reckon?

DAVID
(disarming him)
Ten fifteen pounds.

Faint smile from Russell.

RUSSELL
(hazy)
Big son of a bitch.

Judy arrives, her shadow falling across Russell who sits up now, semi-lucid, the suckerpunch helping clear his head.

RUSSELL
I'm not right, am I?

David shakes his head no. Russell nods in confirmation. Unexpectedly, his voice cracks with emotion.

RUSSELL
Can I keep walking with you guys? Little while longer?

David trades looks with Judy.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - LATER

They're jogging again. Russell struggling to keep up. Judy drinks from a water bottle, passes it to David. He finishes it, tosses it. And before the bottle hits the ground - he grabs her and pull her into the tall grass. They peer through it. Both crouching.

TWO MILITARY TRUCKS butted together form a CHECKPOINT two hundred yards down the road. SIX HEAVILY ARMED SOLDIERS IN BIOSUITS. No way past.

Russell arrives beside them, huffing. Sizes up the checkpoint. Indicates a route through the adjoining field.

RUSSELL
Cut through there, you can pick up the highway on the other side.

DAVID
They'll see us.

RUSSELL
They'll be focusin' on me.

David looks at Russell. He's offering to sacrifice himself.

RUSSELL
Deputy does what the sheriff tells him. You're the sheriff.

Permission. David can't give it. Russell holds out his hand for a gun.

RUSSELL
I’m done, chief, let me go out big.

Moment of deliberation then David puts the revolver in Russell’s hand, making sure it's fully loaded. A beat and then he gives him the shotgun as well, pumping his last shells into the chamber. Gun in each hand, Russell eyes the checkpoint. Steeling himself. Looks at David one last time.

RUSSELL
Hoo-fuckin'-yah.

And takes off through the field toward the checkpoint. We run with him, immersed in the sounds - the SWISHING GRASS, his POUNDING STEPS, and the ROCK ANTHEM he's singing under his breath to psych himself up ("Walk This Way"):

RUSSELL
Met a cheerleader was a real young bleeder oh the times I could reminisce, 'Cause the best things of lovin' with her sister and her cousin only started with a little kiss, like this...

He OPENS FIRE, veering out of the field in a dead sprint at the checkpoint. Takes out four of the six soldiers before they gun him down.

The remaining soldiers gather around Russell's body. David and Judy running to safety through the opposite field.

EXT. HIGHWAY 50 - SUNDOWN

A road sign. Quik Phil's Truckstop 1/2 MILE. David and Judy lengthen their strides.

DAVID
Come on. We're there.

EXT. QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP / STAGING AREA - SUNDOWN

David and Judy slow as they reach the parking lot, anticipation turning to dread.

THE TRUCKSTOP IS ABANDONED.

A ghost town. They kick aside the temporary fencing and walk across the empty parking lot. It's strewn with litter like a state fairground at the end of the season.

DAVID
It was Grand Central last night.

JUDY
They must have gotten everybody out.

DAVID
In what...?

The EVACUATION BUSES are parked in the same spot as before. And booted, like the cars in town, to prevent driving. It's eerily quiet. Which makes the one sound they do hear all the more ominous.

A STEADY HUM from the far side of the parking lot where THREE REFRIGERATED BIG RIG TRAILERS ARE LINED UP.

David and Judy exchange a grim look.

EXT. REFRIGERATED TRAILERS - SUNDOWN

Seventy-footers. Back doors padlocked. Refrigeration units HUMMING. David breaks open a padlock using the shotgun as a pry arm. Swings open the door...

LIFELESS ARMS FLOP INTO FRAME. GREEN BARCODED BRACELETS ON THEIR WRISTS.

David and Judy stare in disbelief. We never see inside the trailer itself. Their faces tell the story.

JUDY
They weren't even sick...

David picks something up off the ground.

A HANDFUL OF M-16 SHELL CASINGS.

DAVID
Nobody leaves.

He flings them across the parking lot in disgust. We hear the shells CLINKING and PINGING over an image of the dangling dead arms.

INT. ENTRANCE, QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - SUNDOWN

A trash can SHATTERS the glass door. David and Judy step through and survey the deserted truckstop. Slot machines glimmer multi-colored in the darkness.

INT. RESTAURANT, QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - DUSK

David and Judy lean over a KANSAS MAP in the empty restaurant. The soft HISS of static on the military radio.

DAVID
We don't get outta here nobody's
ever gonna know what happened.

JUDY
They wiped out an entire town.
What are they going to say?

DAVID
Whatever they want.
(indicates map)
All these roads are gonna be
blocked.

INT. GIFT SHOP, QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - NIGHT

They grab supplies. Bottled water. Chocolate bars. Hats and sunglasses from a display rack as they exit.

INT. CORRIDOR, QUICK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - CONTINUOUS

Come down the hall toward the main entrance.

DAVID
Thirty miles to Wichita. On foot,
avoiding main roads, we'll average
maybe three four miles an hour.
That gets us there by daybreak.

A NOISE stops them. Came from just around the corner. There is it again.

The sound of a COIN TUMBLING THROUGH A PAY PHONE, being taken from the return slot and reinserted at the top where it tumbles down again and again and again.

David motions for Judy to remain silent and perfectly still. Tiptoes to the corner. Peers around it.

Sitting in one of those private pay phone stalls with his back to us is a beast of a man, a giant Oklahoma TRUCK DRIVER in a blood-stained tanktop. The blood is his own, seeping from a gunshot he took in the chest and didn't die from.

David ducks back around the corner. Holy shit. He turns back to Judy, motioning for her to head back the opposite direction. But just then we hear -

THE COIN, TUMBLING THROUGH THE PAY PHONE AGAIN, FALL FROM THE RETURN SLOT AND HIT THE FLOOR, FOLLOWED BY THE OMINOUS SOUND OF IT ROLLING EVER NEARER...

It rolls into view and goes into one of those lazy spins in front of David and Judy.

A stunned pause then they start backing away. Quickly and quietly as possible. The COIN spinning faster and faster. The truck driver's FOOTSTEPS approaching.

He comes around the corner, looks up from the coin at David and Judy. His face is grotesque:

DEAD ON ONE SIDE, THE OTHER HALF IN VIOLENT SPASMS, MOUTH JERKING BACK TO EXPOSE THE TEETH AND GUMS.

As he stands there staring at them - BANG! - he takes a bullet in the side of the head. Gore sprays from the exit wound. He falls and we hear DELIRIOUS HOWLS down the hall.

In one of those corner-mounted security mirrors, David and Judy see who fired the shot -

THE REDNECK HUNTERS

Trudging down the hall in their blood-soaked orange vests. David gestures for Judy to back up fast. She does and he follows her, the two of them retreating into the

INT. RESTAURANT, QUIK PHIL'S - NIGHT

Immediately they are forced to hit the floor as -

THE PICKUP TRUCK

driven by the THIRD HUNTER, pulls up right outside the windows, the back of it heaped with bodies. David and Judy, flat on their stomachs, draw quick terrified breaths.

JUDY
Did he see us?

DAVID
I don't know. We gotta move.

They crawl across the carpet toward the far side of the restaurant.

The two hunters drag the dead truckdriver out by his ankles and heave his body up onto the pile. The third hunter LAYS ON THE HORN in celebration of the kill.

David and Judy crawl behind the counter, through a swinging door into the -

INT. KITCHEN, QUIK PHIL'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

They pause just inside, breathless with fear. David, steadying the swinging door with his fingertips, trying to think what to do next.

JUDY
Maybe they'll leave.

David gives her a doubtful look, steals a peek through the window in the door.

DAVID
Truck's still there.

The driver's seat is empty. No sign of the hunters anywhere. Until -

ALL THREE OF THEM ENTER THE RESTAURANT!

guffawing, guns leveled, looking for prey.

DAVID
Fuck.

David ducks down. Scans the kitchen. No visible exits. They're trapped.

JUDY
Where are they?

David gestures 'right there, shhhhh.' He peers through the crack in the door, watching as:

The hunters search the restaurant, looking under tables, working their way through the seating area toward the kitchen. One of them slips out of view as they approach.

DAVID
They're coming.

David and Judy retreat toward the back of the kitchen. David grabs a couple of knives as they pass the cook's station, hands one to Judy. They hide around a corner, flatten themselves against the wall, David with a finger to his lips telling Judy not to make a sound. And now -

THE KITCHEN DOORS

swing open. The two hunters enter. We hear their heavy bootsteps. The treads leaving bloody footprints on the tiles. They make their way past the cook's station and the sink to

THE VERY CORNER WHERE DAVID AND JUDY ARE HIDING

Here they pause, as if sensing their prey, and then, together, whip around the corner, guns up.

DAVID AND JUDY ARE GONE

But where? We find them around the next corner, their final fallback position. They listen, clutching the knives, to the ADVANCING FOOTSTEPS of the hunters. In the final seconds David sees -

A DOOR

ten feet away. Fire exit. Can they make it? He motions to Judy. They go for it. Slip through.

INT. BACK HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Stop dead in their tracks on the other side. Standing right in front of them is

THE THIRD HUNTER!

With an excited grunt he puts the gun in David's face and pulls the trigger.

CLICK!

Idiot forgot to reload. David drives the knife into his neck and leaves it there as he and Judy take off down the hall. The hunter drops to his knees, puking up handfuls of blood.

The other two hunters explode through the door and open fire. David and Judy run for their lives. The hunters in hot pursuit, galloping along in their bloody boots.

INT. ARCADE - CONTINUOUS

David and Judy cut through an arcade. Pinball machines and slot machines flying past in a blur. BOOM! - a shotgun blast vaporizes a Pacman machine.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They exit the arcade into a hallway with one flickering fluorescent light. David grabs door handles as they run, looking for an exit. This one opens.

A MOP CLOSET

Shit. They run on. Desperate. GUNSHOTS chasing them around the corners. The hunters closing in. Nowhere to run. Except this -

LAST DOOR

David yanks it open. He and Judy race through, down a

CORRIDOR

lined with vending machines and chairs that widens into a lobby of some sort.

ANOTHER DOOR

Flies open. David and Judy, charging through, find themselves in -

INT. GARAGE, QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - CONTINUOUS

The cavernous work area where they service the rigs. David locks the door behind them. A temporary respite because a

PLATE GLASS WINDOW

looks in from the lobby. As soon as they see it, the two hunters are there. David spins, sees:

A BIG-RIG CAB ELEVATED SIX FEET OFF THE GROUND ON A HYDRAULIC LIFT.

On the wall nearby are a DOZEN SETS OF KEYS. David lunges, grabs them.

DAVID
Climb!

Scaling tool chests and oil drums, David and Judy climb up to the elevated truck cab as -

THE HUNTERS SHATTER THE WINDOW AND CLIMB INSIDE THE GARAGE.

David and Judy dive inside the cab as shotgun blasts pulverize the doors. The hunters keep shooting, emptying their guns at the elevated rig. When they stop to reload -

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

David and Judy, crouched on the floor, seize the moment.

DAVID
Lock 'em!

They both lock their doors and crouch back down, bracing themselves for another assault. But there are no more gunshots. Not yet. What they hear instead are TOOLS SPILLING TO THE FLOOR.

JUDY
Oh my God, they’re climbing up!

David jumps into the driver’s seat as the FIRST HUNTER CLIMBS INTO VIEW. He meets David’s gaze with a murderous grin. Aims his shotgun at the glass.

David kicks his door open, sending the hunter flying off to the floor below where his SKULL HITS with a SICKENING CRACK. Undeterred, he starts climbing back up. The SECOND HUNTER scaling the tool chests ahead of him.

But David sees something far more terrifying than these two:

THE THIRD HUNTER

climbs in through the lobby window. Knife still embedded in his neck, blood rivering from the wound, he glares up at David in the truck then starts looking around for something. Sees it over there on the wall.

THE HYDRAULIC RELEASE BUTTON

David reads his intention, tosses Judy the keys. No time to waste.

DAVID
See if any of those work!

Judy starts trying them in the ignition, one after another, tossing the useless sets aside.

The Third Hunter could just press the release button, but decides to shoot it instead. Blows the entire switch assembly off the wall.

THE RIG DOESN'T MOVE.

So the Third Hunter walks over under the truck and starts firing randomly into the sub-floor mechanics of the lift itself. He finally hits some vital part, not anticipating the outcome -

WITH A HYDRAULIC WHOOSH THE BIG RIG DROPS STRAIGHT DOWN.

Judy SCREAMING in freefall.

WHAM! - THE RIG LANDS, CRUSHING the THIRD HUNTER UNDERNEATH.

The other two hunters find this mishap hilarious, LAUGH UPROARIOUSLY. A strange interlude. Judy desperately fishing around on the floor.

DAVID
What are you doing?!

JUDY
I dropped the keys!

David bends to help. Something hits the windshield like a sledgehammer.

THE FIRST HUNTER STANDS ON THE FRONT BUMPER, BEATING ON THE WINDSHIELD WITH A TEN POUND STEEL WRENCH.

Devastating blows. Each impact WHITENS THE GLASS, sending pebbled fragments flying back at David's and Judy's faces. Judy trying whatever keys she can find.

JUDY
None of them work!

WHAM! More pebbled fragments flying back at them. Judy, ducking it, fishes around on the floor for more keys. Finds another set. Tries them. No good.

DAVID
Hurry!

JUDY
I can't find them!

Fishes around under the seat. Finds another set. Jams them in the ignition and

THE DASH LIGHTS ILLUMINATE AS THE DIESEL ENGINE ROARS TO LIFE.

David lets out a howl.

DAVID
YEEEAH!

Throws the rig into gear and with the AIRHORN BLARING -

EXT. QUIK PHIL'S TRUCKSTOP - NIGHT

COMES CRASHING OUT through the garage door. The rig tears off across the parking lot with the redneck hunters staggering after it on foot.

INT. TRUCK CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Speeding down the highway. Pulses pounding. Judy unfolds a map from the glovebox.

JUDY
The smallest straightest road to Wichita.

DAVID
Perfect.

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - NIGHT

The truck races down a country lane, a big moonlit dust cloud rising in its wake.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Judy fiddles with the MILITARY RADIO, picks up a STATICKY SIGNAL.

JUDY
What was that?

She fiddles some more. Snippets of MILITARY COMMUNICATIONS becoming audible through the STATIC:

MILITARY COM
...Fifty-nine...
(STATIC)
...fifty-five...fifty-four...
(STATIC)
...fifty-one...fifty...

Judy and David turn slowly to look at one another. Haunted by the same question.

JUDY
What happens at zero?

David floors the gas pedal.

MILITARY COM
...forty-five...forty-four...
(STATIC)
...forty-two...

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - CONTINUOUS

The truck barrels toward us down the quiet country road.

MILITARY COM (V.O.)
...thirty-six...thirty-five...

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

David and Judy race on, rigid with fear. The dark countryside shooting past the windows.

MILITARY COM
...thirty...twenty-nine...twenty-eight...

Judy scrambles into the sleeper compartment, watching out the back window.

MILITARY COM
...twenty...nineteen...eighteen...
seventeen...sixteen...

JUDY'S POV - The road receding toward the black horizon.

JUDY
FASTER!

DAVID
(pedal to floor)
That's everything!

EXT. COUNTRY LANE - CONTINUOUS

The WILD WHITE EYES of frightened horses jumping back from a roadside fence as the truck flies past.

MILITARY COM (V.O.)
...twelve...eleven...

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

David's white-knuckled grip on the wheel. Judy's face pressed against the back window. That ominous STATIC-LACED VOICE on the radio:

MILITARY COM
...ten...nine...eight...

The road flying toward us out of darkness.

MILITARY COM
...five...

David’s face.

MILITARY COM
...four...

Judy’s face.

MILITARY COM
...three...

Judy reaching over, gripping David's shoulder.

MILITARY COM
...two...

David gripping her hand.

MILITARY COM
...one...

Zero. Judy staring out. David craning his neck.

DAVID
Anything?

Judy silent, waiting, staring.

DAVID
Anything?!

JUDY
No...

DAVID
Nothing?

Just the black horizon. Judy, baffled, meets eyes with David in the rear view mirror.

JUDY
Nothing.

And then it hits.

THE BLINDING WHITE DETONATION OF A NUCLEAR WARHEAD RIPS A HOLE IN THE NIGHT SKY.

Searing white light fills the cab. Judy watching the blast through her fingers.

JUDY
Oh my God...

DAVID
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!

David, bone-chilled, looks out his side window, sees -

A LUMINOUS SHOCKWAVE RACING ACROSS THE PRAIRIE BEHIND THEM, sweeping over eerily backlit barns and houses.

DAVID
GET DOWN!

EXT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The shockwave wallops the truck like a punch from God, pitching it forward on the front axle.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Through the windshield we see the shockwave go shooting past us down the highway, Mach One, its vacuum sucking out the rig's side windows - BOOSH!

EXT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The truck falls back onto its rear wheels, SNAPPING THE REAR AXLE.

INT. TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

David wrestles the rig under control, steers it onto the shoulder, the axle GRINDING ON PAVEMENT. The initial blinding burst dims to an EERIE CRIMSON HALFLIGHT and we see the aftermath, a NETHERWORLD of fire and smoke and swirling ashes:

A mile-wide CORNFIELD engulfed in flames. The POSTS OF A WOODEN FENCE like a row of torches. A hellish BLACK-ORANGE MUSHROOM CLOUD rising up from the prairie beyond.

David and Judy stare in speechless horror. STATIC crackling on the military radio like the countdown never happened.

EXT. KANSAS FIELD - DAYBREAK

David and Judy trudge through waist-high grass. Sun pinkening the sky in the east. Wichita on the near horizon. Looks of hope.

EXT. WICHITA, KANSAS - DAY

People. Traffic. Life as normal. David and Judy walk up a commercial street in the trucker hats and sunglasses they took from Quik Phil's.

EXT. DINER - DAY

Greasy spoon. Full of PATRONS. David sits at the counter in his trucker hat and sunglasses. Quiet. Inconspicuous. Judy is on the pay phone in the back. She hangs up, comes over and sits on the stool beside David.

JUDY
My parents are coming to get us.

David holds his reply as the waitress steps up, pen poised to take their order.

WAITRESS
What'll it be?

DAVID
Couple waters.

WAITRESS
That it?

He nods, catches her hand as she turns.

DAVID
Bottled.

She nods okay. On a tv above the counter, regular programming is interrupted by a SPECIAL NEWS UPDATE. Patrons look up from their meals with the concern one feels for a neighboring community.

NEWS UPDATE
Casualties continue to mount following a devastating explosion at a chemical plant in rural Kansas. Ogden Marsh, a farming community of some four hundred families, is believed to have been leveled in the blast. Authorities continue to search for survivors, but hold out little hope. More as this tragic story unfolds...

The official version of events. David watches in disgust. Judy in disbelief, stating the obvious:

JUDY
That's not what happened.

The waitress brings the waters and the check. As David reaches for the bottles, he pauses, noticing something. There, on the check, by the waitress's smiley-face signature...

A BLACK SPOT

Strange. Like ink from a broken pen. He lifts his sunglasses and the spot turns it's natural color:

RED

Disbelief. He touches his fingers to his nose. They come back dripping. Judy sees the blood. Her look of horror is our final image.

JUDY
No...

FADE OUT.